

# 1 Nephi

## Chapter 11

### 1 Nephi 11-14 (**Nephi's Vision -- Prophetic View**):

According to John Welch, Nephi's prophetic view foresaw the future in four distinct stages, and each time he quoted a section from Isaiah it was because it contained words relevant to one of those stages. . . . The four stages or phases in the Nephite prophetic view are visible in several texts, but never more clearly than in Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11-14, which divides naturally into four sections that correspond to chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14. This influential text seems to have set the basic prophetic frame of reference for the Nephites who followed Nephi. . . .

The four-staged pattern which comprises the Nephite prophetic view are:

1. Christ's coming (chapter 11);
2. his rejection and the scattering of the Jews (chapter 12);
3. the day of the Gentiles (chapter 13); and
4. the restoration of Israel and the ultimate victory of good over evil (chapter 14).

Over and over in the writings on the small plates of Nephi, these four elements provide the outline for Nephite prophecy.

[John W. Welch, "Getting through Isaiah with the Help of the Nephite Prophetic View," in Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, pp. 19-22]

### 1 Nephi chapters 11---15 (**Nephi's Version of the Tree-of-Life Vision**)

These five chapters describe what Nephi saw in vision when he asked the Lord to show him the things his father saw. The resulting vision is remarkable because it sheds additional light on the tree of life vision of Lehi. It also contains much more. It seems at first glance as if Nephi is shown two separate visions: one of the vision of the tree of life and another of the history of the world beginning with the birth of the Savior. Yet in the narrative, the visions are intertwined. A careful study of these chapters reveals that Nephi's vision of the history of the world ties in

perfectly with the vision of the tree of life. Whenever the angel shows Nephi a portion of the dream Lehi saw, whether it is the tree or the rod of iron or the great and spacious building, he next shows him an event in the history of the world which exemplifies the interpretation. The following table shows what historical events Nephi was shown after each portion of Lehi's dream was given.

### Vision of the Tree of Life

#### Vision of the History of the World

##### 1. Tree=love of God (vv 8, .22)

The birth of the Lamb of God to a virgin from Nazareth (v. 13-21)

The Savior going forth among the children of men (v. 24)

##### 2. Rod of iron=word of God (v. 25)

The Lamb of God was baptized (v. 27)

He ministers in power and great glory (v. 28)

12 apostles and the ministering of angels (v. 29-30)

The Lamb of God heals the sick and afflicted (v. 31)

He is judged of the world and crucified (v. 32-33)

##### 3. Large and spacious building=pride of the world (v. 35)

The multitudes of the earth gather to fight against the apostles of the

Lamb (v. 34-35)

##### 4. Mist of darkness=temptations of the devil (1 Ne 12:4,17)

Vapor of darkness covers the Americas for 3 days (1 Ne 12:5)

Christ appears to the Nephites (12:6)

They are righteous up to the fourth generation (12:12)

They fall prey to the temptations of the devil and are destroyed  
(12:17-20)

##### 5. Filthy water=depths of hell (12:16)

## Wickedness and destruction of the Nephites (12:19-20)

### 6. Terrible gulf=justice of God (12:18)

#### Nephites destroyed for their wickedness (12:19-20)

In other words, when the angel explains to Nephi that the tree means the love of God, he next shows Nephi how God loved the world by giving His Son to save mankind from the fall of Adam (Jn 3:16).

When he gives the interpretation of the rod of iron, he shows Nephi the ministry of the Savior and His apostles as they taught the word of God.

The large and spacious building is represented by the multitudes of the house of Israel who were so wicked that they killed the Lord and they gathered to persecute His apostles after the resurrection.

The mist of darkness are the temptations of the devil which overcame the Nephites who were destroyed by the destructions which accompanied the crucifixion of the Savior and by the Lamanites in the final battle. It is by the justice of the Eternal God that the wicked (Nephites) must be separated from the righteous and suffer their just rewards by being cast into the depths of hell represented by the filthy water. Speaking the justice of God and the hell prepared for the those who are filthy, Nephi wrote, Wherefore, if they should die in their wickedness they must be cast off also, as to the things which are spiritual, which are pertaining to righteousness; wherefore, they must be brought to stand before God, to be judged of their works; and if their works have been filthiness they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God; if so, the kingdom of God must be filthy also (1 Ne 15:33).

According to Kent Jackson:

“Nephi's vision consisted of much more than the scene of the tree of life and the efforts of some to obtain its fruits. That scene provided the setting and the backdrop for an even greater set of revelations—an expanded prophecy of the future: the coming of Christ and his atoning mission, the future of Lehi's descendants, the restoration of the gospel in the last days, and the ongoing struggle between the forces of evil and righteousness. These revelations unfolded to Nephi great events of the future and used symbols from the vision of the tree of life to clarify events.” (Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 7: 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, p. 35.)

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## 1 Nephi 11---14: **(Nephi’s Interpretation of Lehi’s Dream):**

[Note\* This is a continuation of commentary on 1 Nephi 8:2 “I Dreamed a Dream” by Dana Pike in which he compares Lehi’s dream to the dreams recorded from the ancient Near East and in the Bible to help understand the cultural perspectives and support the authenticity of Lehi’s dream (1 Nephi chapter 8) and Nephi’s interpretation of that dream (1 Nephi chapters 11-14) in the Book of Mormon text. Alan Miner Personal Notes]

Dana Pike writes:

Literary analysis reveals four consistent elements in the biblical reports of symbolic dreams:

- (1) an introduction, including the announcement that a dream has been received;
- (2) a description of the dream’s contents;
- (3) an interpretation of the dream by someone else, found at variable distances from the dream report and not properly part of it; and
- (4) the realization of the events symbolized in the dream.[53]

For example, all the above features are clearly evident in the dream reports found in Genesis 40-41 of Pharaoh’s officials and of Pharaoh himself and in Joseph’s interpretation of their dreams.

(5) Another feature of symbolic dream reports in the Bible is the use of language that invites readers or listeners into the “living picture” that is being related by the dreamer.[54] One way this is accomplished is by the repeated use of word “behold,” employed by a speaker or narrator to emphasize and draw attention to what occurs in the dream report.[55] For example, the word “behold” occurs six times in the seven verses containing the Pharaoh’s dreams about cows and grain (see Genesis 41:1–7). This emphatic injunction thus encourages readers to look along with the person receiving the dream as it is narrated in the Bible.

(6) Another use of language in biblical dream reports involves wordplay. However much of this has been lost in translation. [56] A classic example occurs in Genesis 40. Angered with his chief cupbearer (“butler” in the KJV [57]) and baker, the Pharaoh imprisoned them in the same facility in which Joseph was being held. The two officials each dreamed a dream; Joseph interpreted both of them, saying to each, “Within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head” (Genesis 40:13, 19). So, on “the third day . . . [Pharaoh] made a feast . . . and he lifted up the head of the chief butler [cupbearer] and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand: but he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them” (Genesis 40:20–22). Thus, with

biblical wordplay, one official's head "was lifted up" through exoneration and one by hanging.[58]

(7) Another example of wordplay in biblical dream reports is the use of word clusters-- concentrations of key words for emphasis.[59] For example, in the book of Genesis the report of the Pharaoh's parallel dreams of cows and grain contains such word clusters. The Hebrew word *sheba*, "seven," occurs seven times in the narration of Pharaoh's dreams (see Genesis 41:1–7) and six more times in Pharaoh's telling of his dream to Joseph (see vv. 18–24). This word then occurs ten more times in the report of Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (see vv. 25–31). This concentration of the word "seven" serves to emphasize the interpretation that a complete cycle of seven years of agricultural plenty would be followed by a full cycle of famine.[60]

In addition to the above literary elements of biblical dream reports, there is also the consideration of rhetorical value. One scholar has correctly observed that biblical and other ancient Near Eastern dream reports can contribute to "the authority, ideology, and persuasiveness of the text." [61] This is evident, for example, in the book of Daniel. Daniel chapter 2 narrates Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, in which Nebuchadnezzar saw a great human image, segments of which were composed of different metals, that was ultimately smashed by a "stone . . . cut out of the mountain without hands" (Daniel 2:45). Significantly, the report of Daniel's interpretation of this dream begins with him verbalizing the claim that "wisdom and might are [God's]. . . . He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise. . . . He revealeth the deep and secret things. The light dwelleth with him" (Daniel 2:20–22). This overriding theme of God's superior knowledge and power, articulated in Daniel's interpretation of the Babylonian king's dream, provides a significant ideological, or theological, perspective that is emphasized throughout the rest of the book.

[Note\* This interpretive wording also establishes Daniel as one speaking for God]

### Lehi's Dream Report in Its Biblical Context

According to Dana Pike, in light of the above overview, the account of Lehi's dream in 1 Nephi chapter 8 (and Nephi's interpretation in 1 Nephi chapters 11-14) definitely share features and characteristics with dream reports in its greater ancient Near Eastern and, more specifically, biblical context. He highlights the following shared features:

1. As reported by Nephi, Lehi's dream was a symbolic one. Interestingly, the claim to have "dreamed a dream" occurs in the Bible only in relation to symbolic dreams, such as those of Joseph (see Genesis 37:5–9) and the Pharaoh (see Genesis 41:15).[62] Nephi's report of Lehi's introduction—"Behold, I have dreamed a dream" (1 Nephi 8:2)—thus matches the phrasing that introduces biblical symbolic dream reports.

2. Just as the Pharaoh's "spirit was troubled" when he awoke from his symbolic dreams about cows and tassels of grain (Genesis 41:8), so Nebuchadnezzar's "spirit was troubled" and he was "afraid" when he awoke from his enigmatic dreams about a human figure made of various metals and about a great tree (Daniel 2:1–3; 4:5). Regarding Lehi's dream, Nephi quotes Lehi as saying that his dream caused him to fear for his sons Laman and Lemuel because in his dream they would not join the family at the tree (1 Nephi 8:4, 35–36). Lehi was thus troubled about certain sons . . . This aspect is similar to the "troubling" that was the outcome of several biblical dream accounts.

3. Consistent with the literary narrative structure previously outlined, Nephi's account first opens with Lehi's announcement that he had "dreamed a dream" (1 Nephi 8:2). This phrase serves to introduce his symbolic dream and is followed by a description of the dream's contents, which appears to be partly quoted from Lehi and partly paraphrased by Nephi (see vv. 5–35).

As noted previously, the interpretation of dream reports involves someone other than the dreamer, and the gaining of that interpretation through revelation. As recounted in 1 Nephi 8, Lehi narrated his dream but provided neither interpretation nor explanation. Later, Nephi learned the interpretation of his father's dream in a God-given vision, which also included further specific knowledge.

[Note\* According to what I previously noted, Nephi might have added his OWN interpretation and detail to Lehi's dream while omitting those details in Lehi's account in order to establish his OWN claim to rulership. ]

With this in mind it is interesting that Dana Pike says here that

"Nephi does not recount that he informed his father —the one who had dreamed the dream—of his [Nephi's] vision and the interpretation he (Nephi) was given. Rather, Nephi relates that he answered his brothers' questions about their father's dream based on what he (Nephi) had learned in his vision (see 1 Nephi 15:1–7, 21–30). However, the first thing Nephi reports after the conclusion of his vision is that "after I, Nephi, had been carried away in the spirit, and seen all these things, I returned to the tent of my father" (1 Nephi 15:1). It is plausible that this is when he informed Lehi of his vision and shared his interpretation, presuming he would have done so before discussing his vision with his brothers.

This variation from the biblical pattern of another person interpreting the dream for the dreamer may be due to Nephi's choice to emphasize his sharing of interpretive knowledge with his less spiritually enlightened brothers. Significantly, however, the pattern in the Book of Mormon of someone receiving a symbolic dream and someone else announcing its meaning is consistent with the biblical pattern.

Pike continues.

Another point in the narrative structure involves the realization of the events portrayed in the dream. The report of Lehi's dream includes this feature, especially in regard to his expressed fears about his sons Laman and Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 8:4, 36) because they would not partake of the fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:17–18, 35). As related in Nephi's own narrative and in the account of the generations that came after him, these fears were fully realized.

4. As mentioned before, the word "behold" was used in biblical dream reports to encourage readers and listeners to see along with the dreamer what they had experienced. While the word "behold" occurs only a few times in 1 Nephi chapter 8. Nevertheless, an alternative expression does serve to invite readers to see what Lehi saw. This is the repeated verbal form "beheld." The English word beheld is also related to the verbs "I saw" and "I have seen. The verb "beheld" occurs eleven times in Lehi's dream (see 1 Nephi 8:2–28). By emphasizing that "I [Lehi] beheld," or in other words, that "I [Lehi] saw [a field, a river, a tree, fruit, etc.]," the report of Lehi's dream not only narrates what he saw, but also invites us to enter his image-rich experience by seeing along with him.

[Note\* In Nephi's interpretation of Lehi's dream (1 Nephi chapters 11-14), the related words "behold," "look" or "looked," "beheld" or "saw" are referred to about 180 times. In Lehi's dream account (1 Nephi chapter 8) these words are referred to about 28 times. In the text Chapters 8, 11-14 in the Covenant Story, I have bolded these words to help the reader be aware of the cultural context of Lehi's and Nephi's dreams.]

5. Most ancient Near Eastern reports of symbolic dreams, including those in the Bible, occur in a narrative context and demonstrate some sort of wordplay. Such wordplay provides keys to interpreting essential features of the dream and serves to connect the dream and its interpretation to the narrative[64] but is often lost in translation. This makes it challenging to ascertain the degree to which Nephi's report of Lehi's dream fits this category, since we only have the text as translated by Joseph Smith. However, one feature that is quite evident in 1 Nephi chapter 8 and 1 Nephi chapters 11-14 is **key-word clusters**

In the thirty-two verses that recount Lehi's dream (see 1 Nephi 8:4–35), the word **tree** occurs nine times (it also occurs nine times in chapter 11 in Nephi's report of his vision).

[Note\* I have found that the word "tree" is referred to 10 times in Chapter 8 and 13 times in 1 Nephi 11-14. ]

Pike writes that the word fruit occurs in the report of Lehi's dream eighteen times (but, interestingly, only three times in Nephi's vision report, once in chapter 11 and twice in chapter 15).

[Note\* I have found that the word "fruit" is referred to 21 times in 1 Nephi chapter 8 and 1 time in 1 Nephi chapter 11.]

These word clusters emphasize the significance of the tree and its fruit in Lehi's dream. Given the focus of the dream, it may seem obvious that the words tree and fruit are so frequently used. However, there is no inherent reason for these terms to occur more than a few times. It is the repetition of the words, over and over again, that heightens our awareness of the significance of these symbols. Accordingly, Lehi's dream and Nephi's interpretation affirm that nothing is more important than associating with the tree and internalizing its fruit. According to one scholar, "the frequency with which we hear these words is more than literary embellishment; it is the thread that ties the dream to its interpretation."**[65]**

Another example of wordplay in connection with Lehi's dream report involves the noun "seed." The Hebrew word zera' ("seed") designates both seeds that are planted in the ground (e.g., Genesis 1:11; Isaiah 5:10) as well as human seed or offspring (e.g., Genesis 15:3; Exodus 32:13). The word "seed" occurs eight times in 1 Nephi 2–7 with this latter meaning, progeny. Nephi reports in 1 Nephi 8:1 that just before Lehi's dream his family "gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain . . . and also of the seeds of fruit." Immediately thereafter in verse 3, Lehi rejoiced because of what he saw in the dream concerning Nephi and Sam that "many of their seed will be saved." But he feared for Laman and Lemuel.

The multiple occurrences of the terms tree and fruit in the account of Lehi's dream imply the notion of seeds even though the word "seed" is not mentioned. However, in Nephi's vision the word "seed" designating descendants occurs thirty-three times.

[Note\* I have found that the word "seed" is referred to 42 times in 1 Nephi 11-14. One will also note that the purpose of Nephi's trip back to Jerusalem in chapter 7 was to bring back Ishmael's family which included the sons (who presumably had married Lehi's daughters) and the daughters of Ishmael (who were to marry Lehi's sons). Thus the idea that the "seeds" mentioned in 1 Nephi 8:1 that Nephi brought back included his posterity and the posterity of his father Lehi is implied.]

[Note\* To add emphasis to the above, Pike notes that Susan Easton Black notes that the word "seed" does not occur in the intervening chapters, 1 Nephi 9–10, which contain Nephi's comments about his metal plates and his report of some of his father's prophecies about the Messiah.] **[66]**

[Note\* There is one very important word cluster that is not mentioned here. That is "The Lamb" or "The Lamb of God." Although it is not mentioned in Lehi's dream (chapter 8), this term is referred to an amazing 60 times in Nephi's interpretation of Lehi's dream (1 Nephi 11-14). I have color-coded this phrase in the text in order to emphasize its importance.]

Pike writes that the Christ-centered nature of the Book of Mormon flows in large measure from this foundational combined dream and vision in its early chapters. The interrelated accounts of Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision authoritatively set the ideological or theological tone for all that follows, rhetorically strengthening the persuasiveness of later uses



of tree and fruit symbolism (particularly in the teachings of Jacob and Alma) and of later prophetic invitations to come to Christ and live.

Thus the recurrence of key words highlighting major symbols in the reports of Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision link these two accounts and serve to emphasize primary themes narrated throughout the Book of Mormon: division and rebellion among Lehi and Sariah's seed and the absolute need to internalize the power of Christ's Atonement, symbolized by eating fruit from a tree.

[Note\* Not just "a tree," but "The Tree," which represents "The Love of God," (1 Nephi 11:22) or in other words "The Son of The Eternal Father" who is "The Lamb of God" (1 Nephi 11:21) and represents "The Tree of Life" (11:25). He is "The Redeemer of the World of Whom My Father Had Spoken" (11:27). He is "The Son of the Everlasting God" (11:32) He is "The Eternal God and The Messiah Who Is The Lamb of God of Whom the Holy Ghost Beareth Record From the Beginning of the World Until This Time and From This Time Henceforth and Forever" (12:18). "The Lamb of God is The Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the World" (13:40). He is the "One Shepherd Over All The Earth" (13:41) He is "The Lord God" (14:25) ]

6. As observed above, "dream account[s] can serve non-literary functions by contributing to the authority, ideology, and persuasiveness of the text." [67] This can definitely be seen in the Book of Mormon. For example, the fact that Nephi and Sam joined their parents at the tree in the report of Lehi's dream, while Laman and Lemuel did not, foreshadows not only division in the family, but the superior role Nephi would play as a religious and political leader and historian among those of his family who, like himself, faithfully followed Lehi's prophetic direction. This development has parallels with Joseph's experiences, in which his own dreams when young (see Genesis 37) were fulfilled through his subsequent political rise to power in Egypt and his superior position within his own family (see Genesis 39–50). [68] In reality, Nephi's transition from spiritual heir-apparent to religious and political leader of his people had already been realized by the time Nephi produced the account of Lehi's dream on his small set of plates. Thus Lehi's dream, as reported by Nephi, serves to foreshadow and substantiate social and political developments among Lehi and Sariah's posterity. [69]

Such biblical combinations of dreams plus interpretations function as prophecy. [73] As Joseph said to the Pharaoh, "God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do" (Genesis 41:25). So, likewise, the combination of Lehi's dream plus Nephi's interpretive vision in the Book of Mormon can be viewed as a great prophecy.

According to Dana Pike, Nephi's report of Lehi's dream is certainly compatible with its biblical Israelite context. The Bible affirms that Jehovah sometimes chose vivid and richly symbolic dreams to reveal knowledge about his plans and to demonstrate his power to ancient people. And all of this grows out of Lehi's matter-of-fact statement one morning, "Behold, I have dreamed a dream" (1 Nephi 8:2). [74, 75]

[Note\* From my point of view, especially when we take into consideration the ancient Near Eastern culture, the biblical culture, and the Book of Mormon text itself, Lehi's dream and Nephi's subsequent vision can be viewed as authentic. In a covenant context, because of their previous obedience to the Lord's commandments, both Lehi and Nephi were granted further light and knowledge concerning their Lord and their God according to their covenant callings. Alan Miner Personal Notes]

## Notes

[53] Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 106–7; and Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 39–41. This arrangement is not so different from the stereotypical features in the reports of ancient Near Eastern symbolic dreams, as discussed by Oppenheim, and cited in note 25, above.

[54] Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 107.

[55] Of course, *hinneh* occurs many times in the Hebrew Bible outside dream reports. Such attestations are usually in narrated speech, similar to the narration of someone announcing a dream. Thus, while *hinneh* frequently occurs in biblical dream reports, it is not unique to them.

[56] See the analysis of Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 113–82.

[57] The KJV rendered the Hebrew noun *mashqeh* in Genesis 40 and 41 as “butler,” but the word is usually, and more accurately, rendered as “cupbearer” in modern English translations.

[58] It is not clear from the Hebrew verb *t-l-h* whether hanging by the neck or impaling—hanging on a wooden stake—is intended here (some commentators also suggest beheading). See Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 129–32, for a discussion of the dream reports in Genesis 40, including further examples of wordplay therein.

[59] As with the occurrence of the emphatic particle *hinneh*, punning and word clusters are not unique to biblical dream reports, but are certainly well attested within them.

[60] See, for example, Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 132–34, for a discussion of this passage. Noegel observes that the report of Joseph's interpretation includes wordplay between *sheba'*, “seven,” and *saba'*, “abundance, plenty,” in Genesis 41:29: “there come seven [*sheba'*] years of great plenty [*saba'*] throughout all the land.” In addition to sounding similar, the consonants of these two words look the same when written.

[61] Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 257.

[62] Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 89, makes this easily verified observation. There are only eight occurrences of the phrase in the Bible (see Genesis 37, 40–41; Judges 7; Daniel 2). The dreams Joseph received when he was still in Canaan (see Genesis 37:1–10) were symbolic but not really enigmatic, since his brothers and father clearly understand the implication of their symbolism. In this case, no specific

interpretation is provided, although the truthfulness of these dreams is verified in the subsequent narration.

[65] Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 170.

[66] Susan Easton Black, “Behold, I Have Dreamed a Dream,” 113–14, makes a partial form of this observation. Further highlighting the occurrence of the concept and word seed in the dream and vision is the fact that seed does not occur in the intervening chapters, 1 Nephi 9–10, which contain Nephi’s comments about his metal plates and his report of some of his father’s prophecies about the Messiah.

[67] Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 257.

[68] See Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 114, for comments on Joseph’s situation.

[73] See the comments of Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 110, on this topic. Frances Flannery, “Dream and Vision Reports,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 550, relates that this view of considering dreams and their authoritative interpretations as prophecy continued through the Jewish Second Temple period, but that Rabbinic authors viewed them in much lower regard.

[74] Recognizing these features also reinforces our understanding of the impact that Israelite cultural practices, as evidenced in the biblical dream reports, had on Lehi and his family. We would not expect them to have developed their own unique literary styles and cultural practices within weeks of leaving Jerusalem, and it appears that they were still heavily influenced decades later when the account of Lehi’s dream was written by Nephi on his “small” set of plates.

[75] The only other occurrences of the word dream in the Book of Mormon as we have it are found in reference to Lehi’s dream (1 Nephi 10:2; 15:21); in Nephi’s quotation of Isaiah (2 Nephi 27:3); in Jacob’s description of his people’s lives passing as “a dream” (Jacob 7:26); in the separate and presumably chronologically earlier dream of the Jaredite Omer (Ether 9:3); and in Korihor’s claim to the Nephite high priest Giddonah that the Nephite leaders “have brought them [the Nephites] to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries,” that they would offend God if they lived differently (Alma 30:28). It is not clear from this statement whether Korihor makes specific reference to the founding dream and vision experiences of Lehi and Nephi, to an ongoing tradition of prophetic dreams and visions that is not represented in our Book of Mormon, or to both. I think the last option is the most likely.

Dana M. Pike, “Lehi Dreamed a Dream: The Report of Lehi’s Dream in Its Biblical Context” in [The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision](#): The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, pp 103- 118]

**1 Nephi 11:1 As I Sat Pondering in Mine Heart:**

[NOTE\* DO A SCRIPTURE SEARCH FOR ALL THE INSTANCES OF PONDERING RELATED TO REVELATION]

. Joseph F. Smith was pondering over the scriptures when he was shown his vision of the spirit world (DC 138:1).

Nephi was pondering as he walked home when he heard a voice telling him, Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done (Hel 10:2-4).

Moroni 10:3 reads, Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and **ponder** it in you hearts.

If we do this, we will have the truth manifested to us by the power of the Holy Ghost. This promise is not limited to determining the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon; it applies to all things (Moroni 10:5).

Joseph Smith wrote from the Liberty Jail, 'and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out' (Teachings, p. 137).

Some of the greatest revelations of all time have come as a direct result of pondering...

, Nephi exulted: 'My soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them.... Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.'" (2 Nephi 4:15-16.)

(McConkie and Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 75)

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### 1 Nephi 11:1 **I Was Caught Away . . . into an Exceedingly High Mountain:**

Prophets have often communicated with the Lord from the mountains.

[NOTE\* DO A SCRIPTURE SEARCH FOR INSTANCES OF HIGH MOUNTAINS]

Ascending a mountain to commune with God symbolizes an attempt to leave the world behind and draw nearer to the Lord.

The brother of Jared saw his vision of the pre-mortal Christ on mount Shelem (Ether 3:1), Nephi was commanded to go into a high mountain to receive instruction on how to build tools and a ship (1 Ne 17:7-11),

Moses communed with God on mount Horeb, i.e. Sinai (Ex 3:1-2),

Ezekiel was shown his vision of the celestialized city of Jerusalem after he was caught away in the spirit into a very high mountain, (Ezek 40:1),

Christ chose to pray on a mountain to get away from his followers (Matt 14:23), and finally the Transfiguration happened on a high mountain apart (Matt 17:1).

These high mountains were like temples for these prophets. The symbolism continues with the practice of building temples on hills or mountains, And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord (Isaiah 2:2).

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

#### **1 Nephi 11:1 I Was Caught Away . . . into an Exceedingly High Mountain:**

Brant Gardner notes that Nephi is caught away in spirit to "an exceedingly high mountain" (1 Nephi 11:1). Why is that? What Nephi wants to see is a vision of a tree of life which was apparently situated near a large and spacious field, not a mountain. Why does the vision begin in a mountain?

Mountains are sacred places in Hebrew cosmology. They form a symbolic world axis (and are therefore symbolically similar to the world tree symbol). The tops of the mountains are conceptually in the heavens and are therefore a logical place for meetings with deity (or the Spirit). Moses meets with God on a mountain, which serves as a sacred symbolic place. [Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1 Nephi/1 Nephi11.htm, pp. 1-2]

#### **1 Nephi 11:1 I Was Caught Away . . . into an Exceedingly High Mountain:**

Here in 1 Nephi 11:1 Nephi's being caught away "into an exceedingly high mountain" calls to mind Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:1-3). Allen & David Richardson and Anthony Bentley note that Book of Mormon critics have often charged that Joseph Smith was an amateur fraud and that he plagiarized many biblical stories and placed them in the Book of Mormon. For example, they point to similarities between Lehi's journey through the wilderness to the "promised land" of the Americas as reminiscent of Moses's journey through the wilderness to the "promised land" of Palestine (Exodus 12-40; 1 Nephi 1-18). Nephi's calling to rule over his older brothers had precedent in Isaac's birthright over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, and Joseph over his older brothers (Genesis 21: 12; 27:1-36; 37:3-4; 48:22; 1 Nephi 2:22). Rather than being a sign of weakness, the recurrence of Book of Mormon events that were foreshadowed in

biblical history, is yet another witness that the Book of Mormon is a true and accurate history. The practice of drawing parallels between current and ancient history is well documented in Alan Goff's article "Boats, Beginnings, and Repetitions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Fall 1992, 1/1, pp. 66-84.

Regarding biblical parallels, especially as they might relate to "an exceedingly high mountain" such as Mount Sinai, it is interesting that there are many parallels between Christ and Elijah. Both spent 40 days in the wilderness, *both climbed a mountain for spiritual renewal*, both performed healings, raised the dead, caused food to be multiplied, the lives of both were threatened. Both ascended into heaven and it was prophesied that both were to make a glorious return.

[Allen H. Richardson, David E. Richardson, and Anthony E. Bentley, *Voice from the Dust-500 Evidences Supporting the Book of Mormon*, p. 101]

Note\* Could Christ and Elijah both have gone to the same mountain (Sinai) in their 40-day wanderings in the wilderness? And was this the same mountain that Nephi was caught away to? [Alan C. Miner, *Personal Notes*]

Note\* See the commentaries on 1 Nephi 1:1, 4:2, 10:9; 3 Nephi 25:4.

### 1 Nephi 11:1 **I Was Caught Away . . . into an Exceedingly High Mountain:**

According to Jeffrey Bradshaw, a parallel to Nephi being "caught away" is found in the experience of Moses in the Book of Moses, where there is a statement that Moses was "caught up." (n173) This phrasing is called the "divine passage." (n172) Nephi later adds the following found in 2 Nephi 4:25:

And upon the wings of **his Spirit** hath my body been carried away [up]  
upon exceedingly high mountains.  
And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man;

There is an old book called *The Apocalypse of Abraham* that is thought to be Jewish in origin, although it has been preserved by Christian hands. (n134). It is noteworthy that the first publication of an English translation was in the LDS Church's *Improvement Era* magazine in 1898. (n135)

The picture below shows the first page of a rare facsimile edition of the *Codex Sylvester* (*Silvestrov svod*), the oldest and the only independent manuscript with the full text of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. It is written in Old Slavonic and dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Most scholars date the composition of the original Hebrew or Aramaic text to within a few decades of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, though it may contain traditions

that are older.

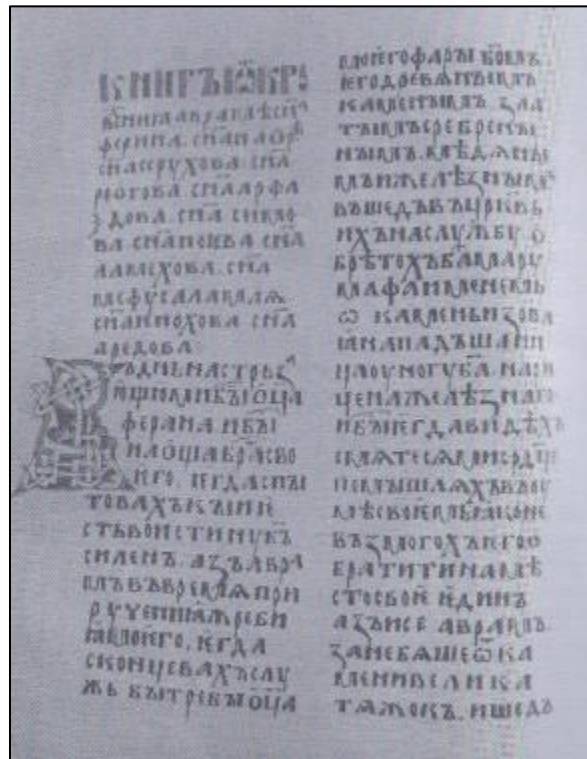


Figure 3-5. First Page of the Sylvester Codex, 14<sup>th</sup> century

*The Apocalypse of Abraham* recounts the visionary journey of Abraham to the highest heaven, where he learns the secrets of Creation and is given a grand vision that includes a history of the world and a view of the spirits that existed with God before the Creation.

We are told elsewhere that Adam was “caught away by the Spirit of the Lord” into the water and baptized.(n174) Note that the Apostle Paul, like Moses and Abraham, was also “caught up” to the third heaven.(n175)

In the picture below we see Abraham and Yahoel [an Angel of the Presence, whose name connotes the “Lord God,” the Divine Name, and whose body, fact, and hair are also reminiscent of God Himself.(n142)]



Figure 3-20. Ascent of Abraham and Yahoel

Here we see Abraham and Yahoel ascending to heaven on the wings of two of the birds provided by God at the time of the sacrifice.(176) The imagery of ascent on the wings of birds is a convention that goes back at least two thousand years.(n177) Once again, Yahoel holds Abraham firmly by the wrist, using the right hand.(n178) Note also the hand of divine blessing from heaven, and the veil marked with a star or sun, along with other markings we have not yet been able to decipher.

Such wording [and imagery] imply a context of priesthood ordinances.

[Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Temple Themes in the Book of Moses, pp. 30, 31, 33, 42, 43]

Note\* The above comments by Jeffrey Bradshaw imply that both Lehi and Nephi saw and experienced much more than what they recorded on the plates.

[Alan Miner Personal Notes]

**1 Nephi 11:1 I Was Caught Away . . . into an Exceedingly High Mountain (Potter):**

While living in the valley of Lemuel, Lehi had a dream in which he saw a tree with fruit

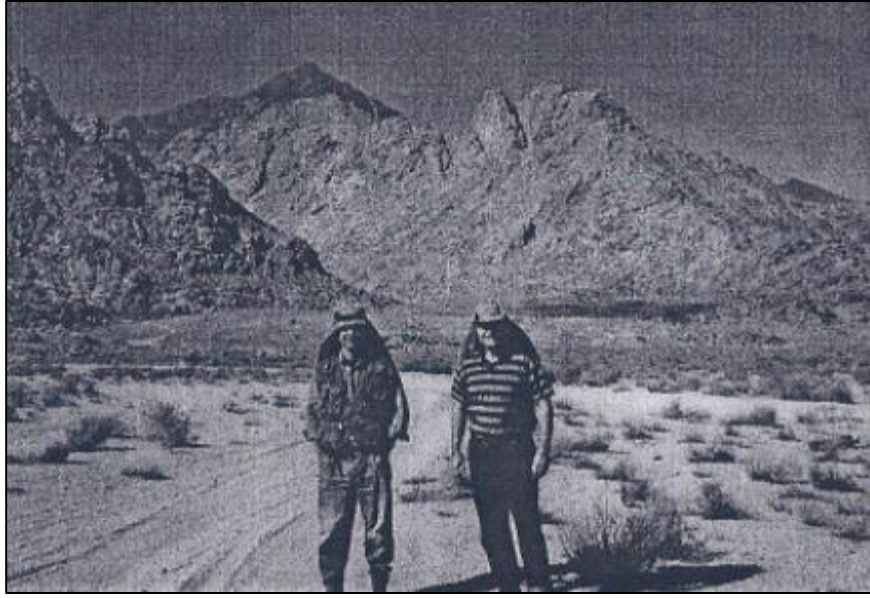


that was "most sweet, above all that [he] ever before tasted" (1 Nephi 8:10-12). When Nephi desired to know the meaning of the dream his father had received, he "was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot" (1 Nephi 11:1). According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, this raises an interesting question. What was the mountain that Nephi was caught up into. The Valley of Lemuel (proposed Wadi Tayyib al-Isim) is only a little over 30 miles from a proposed candidate for Mount Horeb (Sinai) in Arabia. Self-proclaimed archaeologists Ron Wyatt and David Fasold visited the mountain in 1986 but were arrested shortly after their arrival. In 1988 Wall Street millionaire Larry Williams and ex-police officer Bob Cornuke illegally entered Saudi Arabia to visit the mountain. Their exploits are recorded in *The Gold of Exodus* by Howard Blum. They all identified Jebal Al Lawz to be Mount Horeb (Sinai). However the archaeological site they all describe is not found on Jebal al Lawz but rather on an unnamed peak lying in the same range but 8 miles to the south. We have visited the site and can verify much of what Williams has described. The Saudi mount Sinai is 7867 feet high and dominates the plane on which it stands. It certainly qualifies as "an exceedingly high mountain." Is it possible that the Lord would have taken Nephi to a mountain where the Lord had previously spoken to his chosen people (Deuteronomy 1:6)?

[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, pp. 13-14, Unpublished]

Note\* Not only did the Lord visit Moses on Horeb (Exodus 2:15-21; 3:1), the Lord possibly visited a number of ancient prophets, including Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-21) and Paul (2 Corinthians 11:32; Galatians 1:17; 4:24). Moreover, if Moses was a type of Christ, then Jesus possibly visited the site of Sinai during his sojourn in the wilderness. It seems as Sinai was a holy site where holy men prepared to lead covenant Israel to the Promised Land.

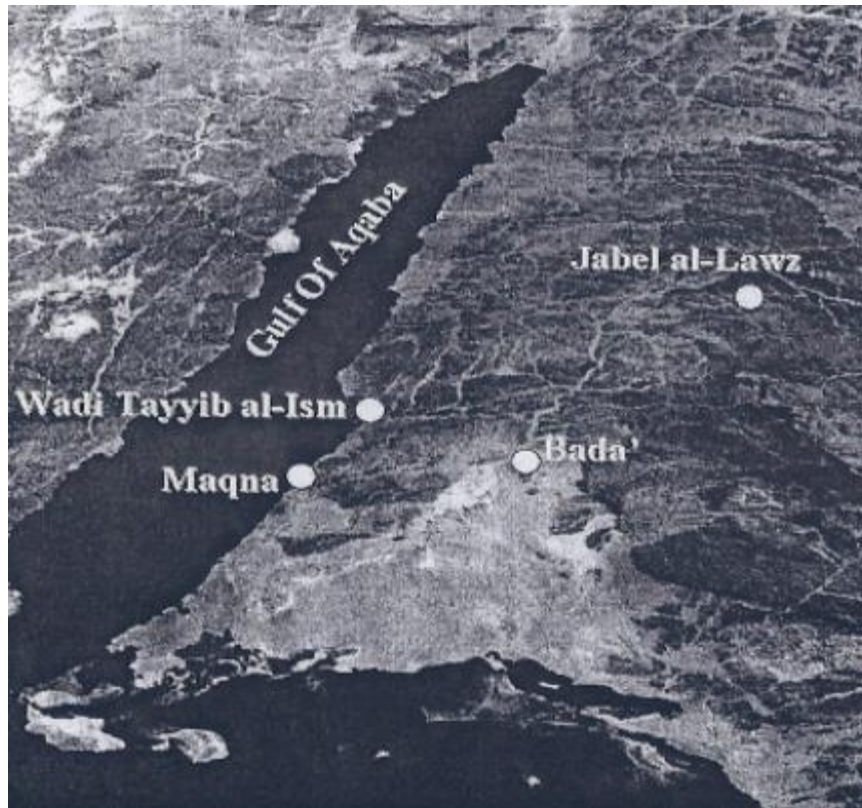
[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [For more information, see the commentary on 1 Nephi 4:2; 10:9; 3 Nephi 25:4]



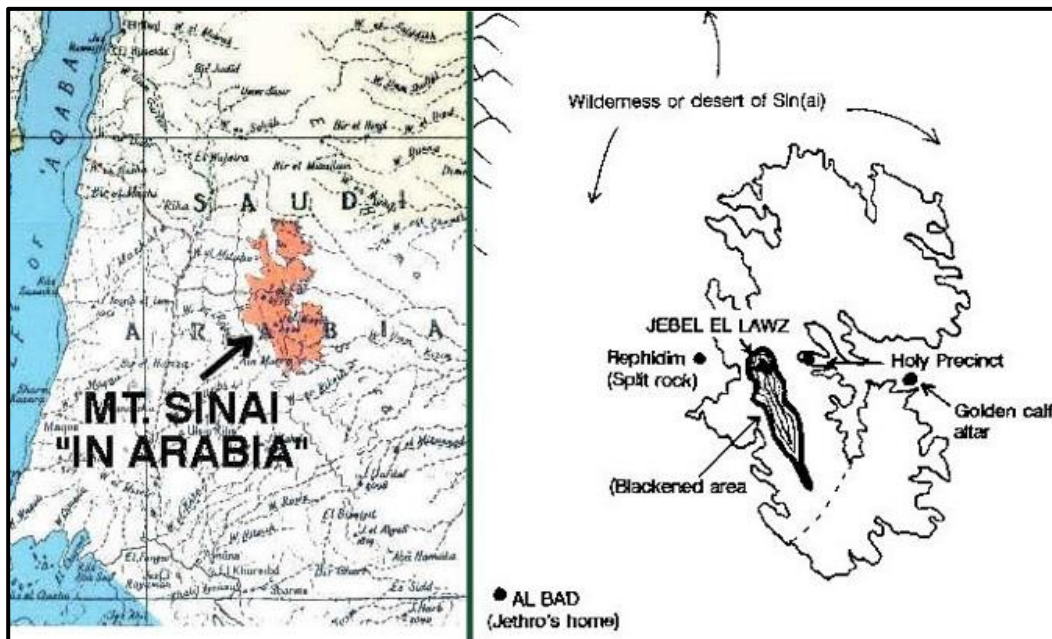
1 Nephi 11:1 **I was caught away . . . into an exceedingly high mountain (Illustration-Potter):** Richard and George at Arabian candidate for mount Sinai, eight miles south of Jabel Al-Lawz. [George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 1, p. 5, Unpublished]



Jewishtraveling.com



1 Nephi 11:1 I was caught away . . . into an exceedingly high mountain (Illustration-Potter): The location of Jabel al-Lawz in relation to Wadi Tayyib al-Ism. [George Potter & Richard Wellington, *Discovering Nephi's Trail*, Chapter 1, p. 6, Unpublished]



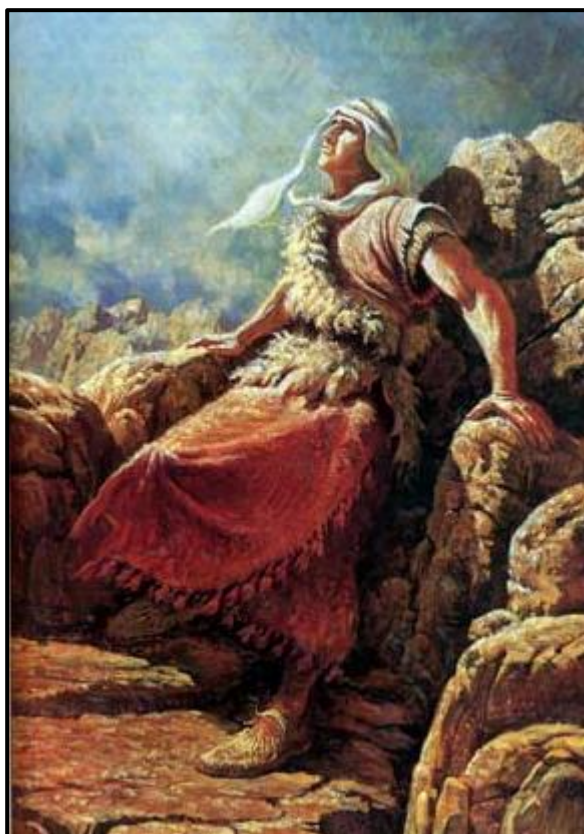
Sermonfollowup.org



1 Nephi 11:3 **I [Nephi] desire to behold the things which my father saw (Illustration – not shown):**  
 Nephi's Vision [Clark Kelley Price, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1]

A Comparison of Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision	
1 Nephi 8	1 Nephi 11-14
Dark and dreary wilderness (4)	High mountain (11:1)
Man dressed in white robe (5)	
Man lead the way (6)	Spirit speaks (11:2, 11)
Man leaves (7--OM)	Spirit's introductory questions (11:2)
Dark and dreary waste (8)	Spirit departs (11:12)
Prayer for mercy (8)	Jerusalem (11:13)
Large and spacious field (9)	
Tree (10)	Tree (11:7, 13-18, 20-25)
Fruit desirable to make happy (10)	Love of God, most desirable (11:22)
Sweet and white above all (11)	Most beautiful and fair (11:15)
Soul filled with joy (12)	Carried away in the spirit (11:19)
Desire to share with family (12)	
Head of river near the tree (14)	Fountain of living waters (11:25)
Call with loud voice (15)	Christ, John, Apostles preach (11:24-31)
Come partake of fruit (15-16)	
Laman and Lemuel do not (17-18)	People reject Christ (11:32-33)
Rod of iron (19)	Rod of iron (11:25)
Straight and narrow path (20)	The Apostles preach (11:34)
Large and spacious field (20)	Great and spacious building (11:35)
Numberless concourses coming (21)	Multitudes like sand (12:1)
Mist of darkness (23)	Mists of darkness (12:17)
Lose their way and are lost (23)	Broad roads and are lost (12:17)
Others come to tree and partake (24)	Four generations (12:10-12)
River is a divider (26)	Great gulf divideth them (12:18)
Great and spacious building (26)	Great and spacious (12:18)
Fine dress, mocking (27)	Pride and vain imaginations (12:18)
They fell away (28)	The good are overpowered (12:19)
Break (29)	War between seed (12:20-23)
Other multitudes partake (30)	Gentile nations (13:3)
Others go to great and spacious (31)	Great and abominable (13:4-9)
	Restoration of Lehi's seed through a great and marvelous work (13:10-14:7)
Many drowned in the depths (32)	Whore upon the waters (14:11)
Many are lost in strange roads roads (32)	Wars and chaos (14:16)
JGW © FARMS 1997	

1 Nephi 11:3 **I desire to behold the things which my father saw (Illustration):** A Comparison of Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision. [John Welch and Morgan Ashton, "A Comparison of Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision," in Charting the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., Packet 1. [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 14:29]



1 Nephi 11:3 **I [Nephi] desire to behold the things which my father saw (Illustration):** Nephi's Vision. While Nephi pondered the words of his father, a vision was opened to him. Artist: Clark Kelley Price. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 34]

#### 1 Nephi 11:5 **I Believe All the Words of My Father:**

In his first book (1 Nephi), Nephi repeatedly focuses on his relationship with his father Lehi. He repeats the theme that he was not only obedient and "did believe all the words which had been spoken by [his] father" (1 Nephi 2:16, 11:5), but that he sought to know the things which his father knew (1 Nephi 2:16, 10:17; 11:3). Furthermore, he repeatedly parallels his own experiences with those of his father Lehi and testifies that both of them were obedient to all the commandments of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 16:8), and that it was through the Lord's power that they were able to accomplish what they did (see 1 Nephi 5:8). In emphasizing this covenant relationship, Nephi invites parallels not only to Abraham (1 Nephi 15:18) but to all "the fathers" (1 Nephi 3:19, 15:14). (It is worth noting that of Abraham, God said, "I know him, . . . he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord"--Genesis 18:19.) Most especially Nephi invites parallels to Christ himself.

Jeffrey R. Holland writes that the relationship between Christ and His Father is one of the sweetest and most moving themes running through the Savior's ministry. Jesus' entire

being, His complete purpose and delight, were centered in pleasing His Father and obeying His will.

In all His mortal ministry Christ seems never to have had a single moment of vanity or self-interest. When one young man tried to call Him "good," He deflected the compliment, saying only one was deserving of such praise, His Father ( Luke 18:19).

In the early days of His ministry He said humbly, "I can of mine own self do nothing: . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

Following His teachings, which stunned the audience with their power and authority, He would say: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. . . . I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true" (John 7:16, 28). Later he would say again, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49).

To those who wanted to see the Father, to hear from God directly that Jesus was what He said He was, He answered, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: . . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:7, 9). When Jesus wanted to preserve unity among His disciples, He prayed using the example of His own relationship with God: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are [one]" (John 17:11).

Even as He moved toward the Crucifixion, He restrained His Apostles who would have intervened by saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). In that most burdensome moment of all human history, with blood appearing at every pore and an anguished cry upon His lips, Christ sought Him whom He had always sought--His Father. "Abba," He cried, "Papa," or from the lips of a younger child, "Daddy" (Mark 14:36). When that unspeakable ordeal was finished, He uttered what must have been the most peaceful and deserved words of His mortal ministry. At the end of His agony, He whispered, "It is finished: . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (John 19:30; Luke 23:46). [Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Hands of the Fathers," in the Ensign, May 1999, pp. 14-16]

#### 1 Nephi 11:6 **Hosanna to the Lord:**

Reynolds and Sjodahl write:

"Hosanna. The Spirit of the Lord, contemplating the great faith of Nephi, and his desire for knowledge, cries with a loud voice, 'Hosanna to the Lord!' The Hebrew, 'hoshiah-na' is an acclamatory prayer for the well-being of somebody, and it means, literally, 'save now!' In this connection it is a prayer to the Lord by the Spirit for the preservation of the

young prophet in his faith. It is a remarkable illustration of the truth stated thus by St. Paul: 'The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us...according to the will of God.' (Rom. 8:26, 27)

[Reynolds and Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 80]

#### 1 Nephi 11:6-7 **The Son of the Most High God:**

Critics of the Book of Mormon view terms like "the Son of the most high God" (1 Nephi 11:6) and "the Son of God" as plagiarisms from the New Testament gospels because they represent later developments peculiar to Christianity. However, according to Matt Roper, both titles have recently turned up in an unpublished Dead Sea Scroll fragment written in Aramaic from before the time of Jesus. Although it is unknown to whom the prophecy refers, the fragment states:

[X] shall be great upon the earth. [O king, all (people) shall] make [peace], and all shall serve [him. He shall be called the son of] the [G]reat [God], and by his name shall be hailed (as) *the Son of God*, and they shall call him *Son of the Most High*,"

The writer for *Biblical Archaeology Review* states,

this is the first time that the term "Son of God" has been found in a Palestinian text outside the Bible. . . . Previously some scholars have insisted that the origin of terms like "Most High" and "Son of the Most High" were to be found in Hellenistic usage outside of Palestine and that therefore they relate to later development of Christian Doctrine. Now we know that these terms were part of Christianity's original Jewish heritage.<sup>i</sup>

[Matthew Roper, Book Review of Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 3 1991, pp. 173-174]

#### 1 Nephi 11:7 **The Tree . . . It Is the Son of God (Potter):**

While living in the valley of Lemuel, Lehi had a dream in which he saw a tree with fruit that was "most sweet, above all that [he] ever before tasted" (1 Nephi 8:10-12). Nephi later desired to know the meaning of the dream his father had received. His wish was granted and he was transported in the Spirit "into an exceedingly high mountain" (1 Nephi 11:1). Here the Spirit instructed Nephi that the tree represented "the Son of God" (1 Nephi 11:7).

According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, since ancient times palm branches

have symbolized victory and kingship. The apostle John wrote that the followers of Christ "took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12:13). But would someone in Nephi's time and place have understood the association between a tree, probably a date palm, and the Son of God? The answer is yes!

Since earliest times in the Near East the king had been associated with the image of a sacred tree. Indeed, Lehi's dream of a tree representing the divine king, Jesus Christ, was perfectly in harmony with Near Eastern imagery of the day Simo Parpola wrote:

The heavenly origin of kingship is already attested in the earliest Mesopotamian cultures. In both Sumerian and Babylonian mythology, it is expressed allegorically with the image of a tree planted upon earth by the mother goddess, Inanna/Ishtar. The sacred tree, usually represented in the form of a stylized palm tree growing on a mountain, is the most common decorative motif in Assyrian royal iconography.<sup>ii</sup>

Lehi was living in the mountains when he saw the tree, and Nephi was taken to a high mountain to have the meaning of the dream revealed. Parpola informs us that "the cosmic nature of the tree is implied by its elaborate structure, absolute symmetry and axial balance." Nephi was amazed by the perfection of the tree he saw and said that its "beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow (1 Nephi 11:8; see also 8:11)

In the book of Daniel the king of Babylon dreams of a huge tree growing in the middle of the earth, its top reaching the sky. He is told by the prophet, "that tree, O king, is you" (Daniel 4:10-22). This imagery is ancient. Several Sumerian kings of the Ur III dynasty, about 2000 B.C., are referred to in contemporary texts as "palm trees" or "mes-trees growing along abundant watercourses." If Lehi had seen in his dream the trees that surrounded him, palm trees growing in the watercourse of wadi Tayyib al Ism, located within the high Hijaz mountains it would be hard to think of a location that more closely fit the classic Near Eastern cosmic tree motif.

To more fully understand the full impact of symbolism of the cosmic tree one must be aware that the Assyrians did not consider their king, represented by the tree, to be a mere mortal. The king was considered to be of divine parentage. According to Parpola, "a perfect king was two thirds god and one third man . . . the son of god . . . a celestial savior figure . . . the son of the divine king, [who] sets out from his celestial home to fight the evil forces that threaten his father's kingdom."<sup>iii</sup>

After being shown the tree "which is precious above all" (1 Nephi 11:9), Nephi desired "to know the interpretation thereof" (1 Nephi 11:11) and was shown a virgin "exceedingly fair and white" (1 Nephi 11:13) the same terminology used to describe the tree. The Spirit continued, "Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the



manner of the flesh" (1 Nephi 11:18). Nephi noted, "And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms" (1 Nephi 11:20). This association of the mother of God with the date palm and the image of the mother nursing the god/king is also one of Near Eastern origin. Parpola once more provides us with insight: "In Assyrian imperial art, the goddess nurses the king as a baby or child . . . the goddess too is identified with the date palm in Assyrian texts."<sup>iv</sup> Ishtar, the mother of the king, was the wife of the Assyrian supreme god Ashur, who Parpola refers to as the "heavenly father of the king" and the "sum total of gods."<sup>v</sup> Ishtar corresponded to Asherah the wife of the supreme Canaanite god El, who was, as Daniel Peterson points out, depicted as a virgin.<sup>vi</sup> (see the commentary on 1 Nephi 11:21) The Asherah mythology was certainly known to Lehi for her symbol stood in Solomon's temple during his lifetime.<sup>vii</sup>

While this vision was given to Nephi of the supreme King who would not be born for another 600 years, it was not an inappropriate image as Parpola points out: "godlike perfection was an inherent characteristic of kings, granted to them even before their birth. According to Assyrian royal inscriptions, kings were called and predestined to their office from the beginning of time."

For the Assyrians, the palm tree was the earthly representation of the cosmic tree that linked heaven and earth and as such represented a king who did the same. For the inhabitants of ancient Arabia the palm also represented a king who did the same. For the inhabitants of ancient Arabia the palm also represented the Tree of Life.<sup>viii</sup> Before Islamic times, the palm tree was worshipped by the people of south Arabia<sup>ix</sup> and was a motif that adorned the large temple<sup>x</sup> and the cemetery of Timna.<sup>xi</sup> The special position of the palm continued in Islamic times. In the Qur'an we can read, "Seest thou how Allah sets forth a parable of a *good word* as a *good tree*" (Qur'an 14:29-31).

To someone from the West, a mental picture of the Tree of Life as a palm tree would not be high on the probability list. Moreover, by what coincidence did an upstate New York farm boy choose a symbol of a palm tree (located in the proposed Valley of Lemuel) which represented the Savior more appropriately than any other object could.

[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, pp. 13-16, Unpublished] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 8:10; 11:21]

### 1 Nephi 11:8 **The Son of the Eternal Father . . . the Tree:**

Brant Gardner notes that after the brief introduction of the miracle of Christ's birth, the angel does two important things for Nephi. The first is to identify the baby as the one who would fulfill the Messianic role, and the other is to clearly identify the Eternal Father as the very father of the child: "And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?" . . . The angel then continues to make the clear association of Christ and the tree by immediately tying the

vision of the birth of the Savior back to the tree.

[Brant Gardner, "Book of Mormon Commentary," 1Nephi/1Nephi11.htm, p. 8]

### 1 Nephi 11:11 **The Spirit of the Lord:**

According to McConkie and Millet, the expression "Spirit of the Lord" is used some forty times in the Book of Mormon, and almost without exception it has reference to the Holy Ghost or to the Light of Christ. If indeed here in 1 Nephi 11:11 the Holy Ghost was Nephi's guide and teacher, this occasion is of tremendous significance, for it is the only scriptural occasion wherein the Holy Ghost makes a personal appearance to man.

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 77]

### 1 Nephi 11:11 **I Knew That It Was the Spirit of the Lord; and He Spake unto Me as a Man Speaketh with Another:**

According to Brant Gardner, there are two opinions about the identity of "the Spirit of the Lord" who introduces the vision to Nephi (1 Nephi 11:11). One opinion is that it is the spirit person of Christ, and the other is that it was the spirit person of the Holy Ghost.

Bruce R. McConkie expresses the first view:

To gain a sound gospel understanding, the truth seeker must determine in each scriptural passage what is meant by such titles as Spirit, Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of God, Spirit of Truth. In many instances this is not difficult; in some cases, however, abbreviated scriptural accounts leave so much room for doubt that nothing short of direct revelation can identify precisely what is meant. We know, for instance, that the Spirit personage who appeared to the Brother of Jared was the Spirit Christ, for he so identified himself. (Ether 3) But when we read the account of the appearance of "the Spirit of the Lord" to Nephi (1 Nephi 11), we are left to our own interpretive powers to determine whether the messenger is the Spirit Christ or the Holy Ghost. Presumptively it is the Spirit Christ ministering to Nephi much as he did to the Brother of Jared, for such is in keeping with the principle of advocacy, intercession, and mediation, the principle that all personal appearances of Deity to man since the fall of Adam, excepting appearances of the Father and the Son together, have been appearances of Christ." ("Spirit of the Lord," *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 752; see also *The Mortal Messiah*, Vol. 1, pp. 413-414).

The opposite interpretation was espoused by B.H. Roberts and James E. Talmage, among others:

That the Holy Ghost is capable of manifesting himself in the true form and figure of God, after which image man is shaped, is indicated by the wonderful interview between the Spirit and Nephi, in which he revealed himself to the Prophet, questioned him concerning his desires and belief, instructed him in the things of God, speaking face to face with the man. "I spake unto him," says Nephi, "as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the form of a man, yet nevertheless I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh to another." (B.H. Roberts, *The Seventy's Course in Theology*, Fifth Year, p. 60; see also *Articles of Faith*, Chapter 8, pp. 159-160).

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page,

"<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi11.htm>, pp. 6-8]

### 1 Nephi 11:13 **In the City of Nazareth I Beheld a Virgin:**

Neal A. Maxwell notes that at least two times in Jesus' earthly ministry, the possibility that He was the expected Messiah was discounted by disbelievers, because the scriptures available to the Jews were assumed to be silent concerning a prophet's coming out of Galilee or Nazareth--only Bethlehem was cited. (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:3-6; John 7:41, 52). Concerning this incident, Robert J. Matthews has noted the following:

As recorded in the King James Version, wise men from the East inquired of Herod about the birth of the "King of the Jews." Consequently, Herod asked the scribes "where Christ should be born." He was told that it was written, "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." (Matthew 2:2-6)

However, as given in the JST, the men from the East asked Herod a more searching question: "Where is *the child* that is born, *the Messiah* of the Jews?" (The Prophet's changes here and hereafter are highlighted by italics.) Herod was told by the scribes that the prophets had written, "And thou, Bethlehem, *which lieth* in the land of *Judea*, in thee shall *be born a prince, which* art not the least among the princes of *Judea*; for out of thee shall come the *Messiah, who* shall *save* my people Israel." (JST Matthew 3:6) As presented in the JST, it is not Bethlehem, but Jesus who is the prince; and he is not simply a Governor come to rule, but the *Messiah* come to *save* Israel. Surely it was Jesus (and not Bethlehem) who was the prince, for he (and not the whole village) was to inherit the throne of David and rule Israel "with judgment and with justice . . . for ever," as recorded in Isaiah 9:6-7. (Robert J. Matthews, "A Greater Portrayal of the Master," *Ensign*, March 1983, p. 9)

The Book of Mormon, however, makes it clear that Jesus' unfolding life would involve Nazareth:

And it came to pass that I [Nephi] looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white. . . . And he [an angel] said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh. (1 Nephi 11:13, 18)

Significantly, Matthew made reference to the prophecy concerning Jesus' being a Nazarene (Matthew 2:23), but it is an apparent reference to a lost book of scripture.

"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

In a bittersweet comment on this loss of scripture, Maxwell writes that one cannot help but wonder what might have happened if, when Herod inquired of the scripturalists of his time concerning Jesus, those advisers had had access to or understood the fulness of the scriptures. [Neal A. Maxwell, Plain and Precious Things, pp. 16-18] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 13:40]

#### 1 Nephi 11:16 **Knowest Thou the Condescension of God?**

This unusual phrase, "condescension of God," deserves some comment. It does not appear anywhere in the scriptures with the exception of 1 Ne 11. In English, to condescend is a commonly used verb, but as a noun, it is rarely seen. In the context of this scripture, it means Jehovah's voluntary surrender of his exalted status as a pre-mortal God to be born into mortality in the most humble of circumstances. The Dictionary defines condescension as the "'voluntary descent from one's rank or dignity in relations with an inferior.'" President Ezra Taft Benson taught, 'It means to descend or come down from an exalted position to a place of inferior station.' " (Ensign, Dec. 2001, 18). Before being born of Mary, he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. After the virgin birth, he was seen as the carpenter's son.

"The condescension of God" is referred to again with reference to the baptism of Christ (v. 26-27). In this instance it means Christ's condescension to submit to an ordinance designed for sinners. He does it not because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is in need of baptism, but to fulfill all righteousness, according to the will of the Father.

"...And so the angel said to Nephi, 'Knowest thou the condescension of God?' (1 Ne. 11:16). I believe we know something of His condescension—as God the Creator, Redeemer, Exemplar. For instance, we know:

- He descended to be born of a mortal woman, even though He was glorified and exalted.
- He descended to be baptized of man, even though He was perfect and sinless.

- He descended to minister to the humblest of the humble, even though He was exalted.
- He descended to subject Himself to the will of the Father, suffering Himself to be tempted, mocked, scourged, cast out, and disowned, even though He was all-powerful.
- He descended to be judged of the world, even though He was the Judge of the world.
- He descended to be lifted on the cross and slain for the sins of the world, even though no man could take away His life.

(Ensign, Dec. 2001, 18-20)

[\[josephsmith.com.1nephi\]](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)

### 1 Nephi 11:16 **The Condescension of God:**

Gerald Lund notes that after Lehi recounted to his family his marvelous vision in which he had seen the tree of life, Nephi reported that he was "desirous also that [he] might *see*, and *hear*, and *know* of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:17; emphasis added). Nephi was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain where a grand vision was unfolded before him, and he saw not only what his father had seen but also much more. In the early part of that vision, on two different occasions, the angelic messenger used an unusual phrase--"the condescension of God" (1 Nephi 11:15-16; 11:26). . . . As Nephi obeyed the angel and looked, he saw the Redeemer of the world. He saw his earthly ministry and its culmination in the death of the Savior (see 1 Nephi 11:26-32). . . .

According to Lund, if we are to more fully comprehend the idea of God's condescension, we must first understand who he was before coming to earth. As we look at Christ as the Creator, we are told in latter-day revelation that the extent of his creations is so vast that they cannot be numbered unto man (Moses 1:33, 35, 37). Enoch stated the same idea in a much more dramatic form when he said the following: "And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations" (Moses 7:30).

For much of the world's history, man has had to accept these statements basically on faith, for as we look up in the heavens with the naked eye, we can see approximately six thousand stars. Only in our own century have we begun to sense the vastness of the universe. . . . The vastness of space is such that normal measurements do not suffice to describe the distances between stars and galaxies. So astronomers have come up with a measurement called the "light year" or the distance that light traveling at approximately 186,000 miles-per-second will travel in a year's time. That distance turns out to be approximately six trillion miles. Here is an analogy to help us conceptualize the vastness of the universe. Someone calculated

that if we took the distance from the earth to the sun, which is ninety-three million miles, and reduced that in scale down to where it was the thickness of a single sheet of typing paper, the distance from our earth to the nearest star would be a stack of paper seventy-one feet high! On that same scale, the diameter of the Milky Way, our own galaxy, would be a stack of paper three hundred and ten miles high. And if we carried that same scale on to the edge of the known universe, we would have a stack of paper thirty-one million miles high or a stack of paper that would stretch from the earth nearly one third of the way to the sun.<sup>xii</sup>

When we consider the incredible vastness of the numbers of creations, all of which were completed under the direction of the Father by the Only Begotten, we begin to sense the position, the majesty and power that were his before his coming to earth.

[Gerald N. Lund, "Knowest Thou the Condescension of God?," in Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: The 1991 Sperry Symposium, pp. 80, 82-83] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 4:26]

Note\* According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (James Strong, S.T.D., LL.D., Hendrickson Publishers), the term "condescension" or "condescension of God" is not found in the Bible. The word "condescend" is found but once, in Paul's epistle to the Romans, where Paul lists a number of qualities required for saintly living: "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate" (Romans 12:16). [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

#### 1 Nephi 11:18 **The Mother of the Son of God:**

The first edition of the Book of Mormon (1830) reads as follows: "Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is *the mother of God*, after the manner of the flesh." According to McConkie and Millet, indeed Christ is God, the God of creation, the God of Israel, and the Father of salvation. Mary is his mother. Joseph Smith changed this phrase to "mother of the Son of God" (1 Nephi 11:18) in the 1837 and 1840 editions of the Book of Mormon, and all subsequent editions have retained the alteration. Joseph Smith exercised his prophetic-editorial right to clarify and explain what had previously been written.

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 79]



1 Nephi 11:18 **The virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God (Illustration):** Nephi Sees the Virgin [Robert T. Barrett, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 7]



Angel Gabriel and Mary

wisdomlib.org

### 1 Nephi 11:18 **[Son of]:**

Terryl L. Givens notes that in the 1837 edition, the words "Son of" were inserted before the Deity title in four verses: 1 Nephi 11:18, 11:21; 11:32, and 13:40. This change is clearly less than revisionist when one considers that in 1 Nephi and elsewhere, "Son of God" was already present as a common Book of Mormon formulation. [Terry L. Givens, By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion, p. 300]

### 1 Nephi 11:18 **The Mother of the Son of God:**

According to Daniel Peterson, there is a Coptic version of the record called the *Apocalypse of Paul*. This document probably originated in Egypt in the mid-third century of the Christian era and relates a vision of the great apostle that, in some details at least, strikingly resembles the vision of Nephi: "And he [the angel] showed me the Tree of Life," Paul is reported to have said, "and by it was a revolving red-hot sword. And a Virgin appeared by the tree, and three angels who hymned her, and the angel told me that she was Mary, the Mother of Christ."<sup>xiii</sup> [Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi & His Asherah," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, FARMS, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, pp. 16-18]

### 1 Nephi 11:20 **The Virgin:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, "The Virgin" (1 Nephi 11:20) is the title given to the Mother of Jesus in the prophecy of his birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). There is very little information in the New Testament concerning Mary. But from what is written about her, it is evident that she was a woman of the highest mental and spiritual culture. That she was a regular visitor in the temple, well known by the officials in the sacred edifice, is also indicated by the story of the appearance of her divine Son there at the age of twelve years. A boy of obscure parentage would not have had a chance to remain among the learned doctors for several days, as he did.

Early traditions, recorded in the Protevangelium and some other apocrypha, related that Mary was born at Nazareth, the daughter of Joachim and his wife, Anna. The father is said to have been a very wealthy citizen, known for his generosity and observance of the law. For many years the worthy couple lived together childless. But, finally, they promised the Lord that a child of theirs would be dedicated to the Lord, i.e. to the temple service. Then, in due time, the baby girl, to whom they gave the name of Mary, came. She was the answer to their prayers, the reward for their faithfulness.

When the girl was three years old--so the tradition avers--she was taken to the temple



and, in accordance with the promise made, dedicated to the service of the Lord. From now on, she was raised and educated under the direction of the authorities of the temple. The summer months, it is said, she spent at Nazareth, the rest of the year she served in the Sanctuary.

Now it seems to have been customary, as regards the young ladies raised for temple service, to give them an opportunity, when they arrived at the marriageable age, to choose for themselves whether they would continue to remain virgins of the Lord for ever, or become wives and mothers. Mary's choice was to continue the temple service, but, guided by a special revelation, the high priest selected Joseph of Nazareth to be her legal guardian and husband. (Protevangelium, Chapter 8) She was then twelve years old.

After the wonderful story of the birth of the Savior of the world the evangelists say little of Mary. She is mentioned in the account of the marriage feast at Cana (John 2), and as one attending a gathering outside a synagogue where Jesus had been preaching (Mark 3:31), and then as standing near the cross, when her crucified Son commended her to the care of John (John 19:25-7). She is, finally, mentioned as one of the women present in the "upper room" in Jerusalem, after the ascension of Jesus from the Mount of Olives. (Acts 1:13,14)

Tradition has it that she died in Jerusalem in the year A.D. 48, and that her body also was taken to heaven. The latter "assumption" is based on the story that the apostles, three days after her interment, found the tomb empty.

All this, except the accounts given by the evangelists, is tradition. That the story has an historic foundation is not denied. But to separate the historic element from what is mere fiction, is not always possible at this late day.

Before leaving this subject, a word should be said of Anna, the prophetess, mentioned by Luke. She, too, must have been one of the virgins of the Lord, dedicated to the temple service. She was of the tribe of Asher. This may be accounted for by the fact that when Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent a call to Israel, as well as Judah, to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, some people of the tribe of Asher, and also of the tribes of Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. The forefathers of Anna may have come to Jerusalem at that time. The forebears of Lehi, of the tribe of Manasseh, may also have come at the invitation of Hezekiah. (2 Chronicles 30:1-12,16,19) The Evangelist says of Anna, that she was a prophetess. Like Mary, she had been given to a husband, when grown up. She had lived with him only seven years. Now she was eighty-four years old, a widow but "she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Furthermore, she preached the gospel of the Redeemer "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:36-38)

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, pp. 83-84] [See the commentary on Mosiah 3:7, 8]



1 Nephi 11:20 **I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms (Illustration):** Nephi Sees the Birth of Christ [Robert T. Barrett, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 7]



1 Nephi 11:20 **And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms (Illustration):** Nephi's Vision of Mary. Artist: Judith Mehr. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Ensign, December 1997, inside front cover]



1 Nephi 11:20 **I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms (Illustration):** "He Shall Bring Forth a Son." Mary holds the baby Jesus Artist: Liz Lemon Swindle. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 30]

1 Nephi 11:21 **The Lamb of God:**

In 1 Nephi 11:21 mention is made of the "Lamb of God." Critics have claimed that this phrase is strictly New Testament language (compare John 1:20), and that this proves that Joseph Smith was plagiarizing the Bible.

According to Charles Pyle, until critics produce the original writings of all of the prophets of the Old Testament age, and prove, beyond all doubt that such is the case, they cannot make this claim! Besides, this term occurs in the context of a vision that Lehi saw (1 Nephi 10:7-10), in which he *hears* John the Baptist bear record that he had baptized the Lamb of God. In this vision it is an angel of the Lord that commands Nephi to "Behold the Lamb of God." It is also possible, considering the fact that the small plates of Nephi were made some years after this vision, that the term "Lamb of God" became part of Nephi's vocabulary at this time, and was incorporated into his later description of his father's vision. Equally possible, is that Nephi could have drawn upon the imagery of the lamb brought to the slaughter to made an offering for sin, as found at Isaiah 53:7, 10, which would have been part of the plates of brass. At any rate, God can say the same thing twice, if he so chooses, even if critics of the Book of Mormon don't

believe so.

[E. Charles Pyle, "Review of 'The Book of Mormon Vs. the Bible (or Common Sense),'"  
<http://www.linkline.com/personal/dcpyle/reading/bodineco.htm>, p. 8]

### 1 Nephi 11:21 **The Lamb of God . . . the Son of the Eternal Father:**

Joseph McConkie and Robert Millet note that in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, this verse read as follows: "Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even *the Eternal Father*." (cf. Isaiah 9:6; Mosiah 15:4; Alma 11:39)

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. I, p. 80]

### 1 Nephi 11:21 **Knowest Thou the Meaning of the Tree Which Thy Father Saw?**

According to Daniel Peterson, Nephi's vision of the tree of life in 1 Nephi 11 expands upon the vision received earlier by his father, Lehi. In that vision Nephi wanted to know the meaning of the tree that his father had seen and that he himself now saw (see 1 Nephi 11:8-11). One would expect "the Spirit" to give a straightforward answer to Nephi's question, but his response is surprising. He allows Nephi a vision of Nazareth and a virgin, "exceedingly fair and white" and then asks: "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" Nephi responds, "I do not know the meaning of all things." Then the Spirit says, "Behold the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh." Nephi then sees that after she was carried away in the Spirit for a time, she once again appears bearing a child in her arms. The angel then says to Nephi: "Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!" (1 Nephi 11:12-21)

Then "the Spirit" asks Nephi the question that Nephi himself had posed only a few verses before: "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?" (1 Nephi 11:21) Strikingly, though the vision of Mary seems irrelevant to Nephi's original question about the significance of the tree--for the tree is nowhere mentioned in the angelic guide's response--Nephi himself now replies that, yes, he knows the answer to his question. "It is the love of God . . ." (1 Nephi 11:22-23)

Peterson then asks, How has Nephi come to this understanding? Clearly, the answer to his question about the meaning of the tree lies in the virgin mother with her child. It seems, in fact, that the virgin **is** the tree in some sense. Even the language used to describe her echoes that used for the tree. Just as she was "exceedingly fair and white," "most beautiful and fair above all other virgins," so was the tree's beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow." Significantly, though, it was only when she appeared with a baby and was identified as "the mother of the Son of God" that Nephi grasped the tree's

meaning.

Why would Nephi see a connection between a tree and the virginal mother of a divine child? Peterson believes that Nephi's vision reflects a meaning of the "sacred tree" that is unique to the ancient Near East, and that, indeed, can only be fully appreciated when the ancient Canaanite and Israelite associations of that tree with the worship of Asherah (the Mother Goddess) are borne in mind. Of course, Mary, the virgin girl of Nazareth seen by Nephi, was not literally Asherah. She was, as Nephi's guide carefully stressed, simply "the mother of the Son of God, *after the manner of the flesh*." (1 Nephi 11:18) But she was the perfect mortal typification of the mother of the Son of God.

[Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi & His Asherah," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies , FARMS, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, pp. 16-18, 22]

Note\* In order to better understand the concept of Asherah, I will refer to read er to the remarks of another author below. But before I do, I will also note that this vision of Nephi's concerning Mary and the Son of God has many similarities to a vision given to King Benjamin. For that reason I will refer the reader to the commentary on Mosiah 3. As a final note, the reader should be aware that in the first edition, 1 Nephi 11:18 significantly read "mother of God" rather than the "mother of the son of God." This seems to be even a stronger link to the concept of Asherah, the Mother Goddess of all gods.

Now the excerpts which follow are taken from an article by Fred Collier ("The Common Origin of Ancient Hebrew/Pagan Religion and the Demise of the Hebrew Goddess"). Though I do not subscribe to many of his beliefs, nevertheless in reviewing his article I found a number of items worthy of consideration concerning the veneration of Asherah in ancient Israel.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

Fred Collier writes:

Archaeological excavations have revealed that although there were many languages and cultures which existed in the ancient Near East, their ideas about God and religion were incredibly alike--and this rule of thumb does not altogether except the Hebrews. The gods of the Pagans went by different names, but for the most part, the roles which they played all seemed to follow a basic pattern<sup>xiv</sup> What is significant here is that anthropomorphic polytheism along with belief in a Father and Mother in Heaven was one of the most fundamental beliefs. Not only so, but it was a belief which prevailed from the time of Adam to Christ, and that too, in both Pagan and Hebrew religion. This is in sharp contrast to the religion of abstract monotheism which, as scholars have discovered, did not come into existence until the time of the Greek philosophers who first invented it.<sup>xv</sup> In fact abstract monotheism or so called pure monotheism of any kind is entirely foreign to the Bible<sup>xvi</sup> Even in Isaiah there is plenty that remains from the old religion of the Patriarchs.<sup>xvii</sup>

To the Patriarchs, the gods were many, but their loyalties centered in the supreme God whose name was El. El was "the father of the gods" and the "father of men," the "creator of created things," the "father of years," He was conceived of "as an old man with a white beard." He was "wise," "benevolent" and "merciful."<sup>xviii</sup> He was also married and His wife's name was Asherah,<sup>xix</sup> and together they ruled supreme among the gods. The whole pantheon was a patriarchal order, composed of the sons and daughters of two heavenly parents who were thought of as God the Father and God the Mother--El and Asherah. It is significant that El and Asherah were thought of in the same light as Eloheim and wife are in Mormon theology, and as it turns out this is with good reason, for Eloheim is the plural expression of the divine name El, and throughout the Old Testament, El and Eloheim alternate interchangeably as different names for the same great God.

In accordance with Patriarchal religion, the creation of man in the image and likeness of God as described in Genesis was originally understood in terms of procreation. That this is so is still manifest in the fifth chapter of Genesis where the same words, "image" and "likeness" are used to describe the birth of Seth and the resemblance which he bore to his father Adam.<sup>xx</sup> On two different occasions the New Testament perpetuates this same tradition: first in the book of Luke where it states that Adam was the son of God just as Seth was the son of Adam (Luke 3:38); and then again in Acts where it is declared that "we are the offspring of God." (Acts 17:28-29) All this fits in perfectly with the old patriarchal religion, for not only was El declared to be the Father of all the gods in heaven, He was also believed to be the Father of all mankind on earth.<sup>xxi</sup>

In ancient Canaanite texts it is attested that El and Asherah worship was associated with images or idols and the Bible indicates that the Patriarchs made use of these in their cultic rituals. Now before any of you jump out of your skin, you should realize that there was more than one form of idolatry, and the form to which the Patriarchs subscribed was not the worship of a stone or a carved image under the delusion that it was God. They did not worship the image any more than we worship the Christus statue in the visitors center.<sup>xxii</sup> The images used by the Patriarchs and Prophets during the early period of the Old Testament were thought of in the same way . . . that ancient Israel thought of the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>xxiii</sup>

In the case of the Patriarchs, it was customary to set up a sacred stone pillar near a sacred tree and to consecrate it with oil.<sup>xxiv</sup> Often this would be in some high place on a hill or in the mountains. The stone pillar was to symbolize the presence of the Father God, El, and it is believed by many that these sacred stones were the original meaning behind such divine names as "the Stone of Israel," or "The Rock of Jacob."<sup>xxv</sup> On the other hand, the sacred tree was to symbolize the presence of El's wife and our Heavenly Mother, Asherah.<sup>xxvi</sup> Another method of depicting Asherah was to carve the figure of a woman in a log and plant it upright in the ground like an Indian totem pole.<sup>xxvii</sup> Usually it would be planted under a large spreading leafy tree or in a grove of trees, where both the sacred stone and the sacred tree or pole would stand side by side.

It is regrettable that most of the references to sacred trees have been obscured in the King James translation. This is because the Kings James version was based on the Masoretic Text which was tampered with by Jewish interpreters in an effort to remove the implication of Asherah worship. However, other Old Testament manuscripts have survived, and these consistently show that sacred trees formed a part of Patriarchal religion, and this information is now available in some of the newer translations of the Bible. One example of this is found in the beginning of the eighteenth chapter of Genesis. The King James translation says that "the Lord appeared unto [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre." But the Jerusalem Bible translation says that "Yahweh appeared to him at the Oak of Mamre."<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Fortunately, even in the King James translation a vestige of Asherah worship as practiced by the Patriarchs still remains. It is found in the twenty first chapter of Genesis, where it is stated that Abraham planted an grove, and called upon Jehovah the Everlasting El.<sup>xxix</sup>

Anciently to a Hebrew woman fertility was considered as the greatest blessing from the Lord, and to be barren was to be cursed. Even in the creation, the first law of heaven as decreed by God was to "multiply and replenish the Earth."<sup>xxx</sup> Bearing this in mind the importance of Asherah worship to the Patriarchs and their wives is easy to understand, for it was believed among Hebrews that Asherah "promoted fertility in women and facilitated childbirth."<sup>xxxi</sup> Asherah was the wife of El and the primordial mother of all gods and men and all this came about through the power of procreation. In the most perfect sense of the word Asherah and El were the Fountain of Life and the ultimate symbol thereof.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Yet the worship of Asherah became corrupt. What was originally intended to be reserved for the marriage bed began to be passed out indiscriminately in public affairs which were nothing less than a communal sex orgy. Images to Asherah were erected all over the hill country, almost as it were under every green tree, and whole communities would go up to these altars and have an orgy.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

It is in this area that there was a great distinction between the religion of the Patriarchs and that of the Canaanites. The difference was not in the idea that they prayed to a different God, for they did not. Nor was the difference to be found in the practice of their rituals. The great distinction between the religion of the Patriarchs and that of their neighbors was their belief in the basic morality of God. It was a belief in a certain moral code of right and wrong which God had given to His children, but which through varying degrees of degeneration, other cultures had lost sight of.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Thus, during the 400 years that passed between the Patriarchs and the time of Moses, the land of Canaan went through several significant religious changes. Probably the most important of these is found in the fact that an alien Storm God by the name of Baal Haddu was imported into Canaan and ultimately succeeded in displacing El and becoming the ruling god of the pantheon. There is no reference to Baal in Genesis,<sup>xxxv</sup> but by the time of Moses his cult

flourished in Canaan. He is first mentioned in the twenty second chapter of the Book of Numbers.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Originally Baal was the son of Dagon, but once his cult succeeded in becoming strong he was written into the mythologies as though he was one of El's sons.<sup>xxxvii</sup> . . . Finally El even lost Asherah to Baal, who took her for his wife.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Thus all over the hill country in Canaan, there were stone pillars erected to Baal with an image of Asherah standing at his side, and all the communities in Canaan would go up to these and in the process of worshiping Asherah and Baal commit whoredom.<sup>xxxix</sup>

When God first appeared to Moses in the desert He identified Himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In continuing, the Lord instructed Moses to go down into Egypt and tell the children of Israel that "Yahweh the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" had sent him to them.<sup>xl</sup>

It has already been stated that the God El was thought of as an exalted man. Still in both Israelite and Canaanite religion, El's cultic symbol was the bull. even in the Bible God is referred to as the "Bull of Jacob."<sup>xli</sup> Many scholars have argued that the symbol of a bull was intended to signify El's prolific powers as the great procreator of all gods and men.<sup>xlii</sup> In other words the basic idea was that of a fertility symbol, which took the form of a copulating bull. Still others have thought that the Bull symbolizes power and strength.<sup>xliii</sup> It is significant that Baal also took on this same royal symbol. Sometimes he was portrayed standing on a bull, and at other times he was depicted with a helmet on, which had horns coming out of each side.<sup>xliiv</sup>

The evidence indicates that a symbol for the presence of Yahweh/El was the intended meaning of the Golden Calf. "The word calf does not preclude the figure of a mature ox (Psalm 106:20)"<sup>xlv</sup> which was constructed by the children of Israel in the desert. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* makes the following statement: "The rabbis report that the golden calf was made as a replica of the bull in the divine throne. This tradition corresponds to the religious ideas current at that time in the Near East. Reference to the "heavenly bull" is found in very ancient Egyptian sources. The bull was considered to be the seat of different gods in Egypt, Babylonia, and Aram<sup>xlvi</sup> In Israelite tradition the bull formed part of the divine throne. The same is also true of the other two calves which were built later in the northern Kingdom by Jeroboam, and set up in Dan and at Bethel.<sup>xlvii</sup> In all three cases the scriptures clearly state that in the mind of those who constructed them the image was built to Yahweh/El, the true God of Israel. In speaking with reference to the Golden Calf, it states "Here is your God, Israel" . . . "who brought you out of the land of Egypt!"<sup>xlviii</sup>

It is [Fred Collier's] opinion that the real cause for offense on this occasion is to be found in the nature of the celebration which they held the following day in honor of Yahweh/El. To be sure it was the image which inspired their transgression, but it was what Moses found them doing when he came down from the mount which was so abhorrent. The scriptures tell us that



after they had offered sacrifices, "then all the people sat down to eat and drink, and afterwards got up to amuse themselves."<sup>xlix</sup>

It is this terse comment on the end which wants looking into. They "go up to amuse themselves." Another version reads they "got up to indulge in revelry."<sup>li</sup> The Septuagint suggests that they were having a sex orgy, and most scholars and commentaries agree that this is the case.<sup>li</sup>

There was no mention of the presence of Asherah at the festival, but you can bet her image was there, for in the mind of ancient Israel Yahweh/El and Asherah were a pair--they went together--and besides, one without the other just would not do for an orgy.

Moses' response to what he found taking place as he descended the mount is found in the book of Exodus: "Who is for Yahweh? [come] To me!" he called out. "And all the sons of Levi rallied to him. And he said to them, This is the message of Yahweh, the God of Israel, Gird on your sword, every man of you, and quarter the camp from gate to gate, killing one his brother, another his friend, another his neighbor" . . . "and of the people about three thousand men perished that day."<sup>lii</sup>

In other words kill anyone and everyone that comes in your sight, friend or foe, father, brother or son, for the whole camp of Israel were guilty. The old patriarchal religion had become corrupt. Even in the case of Israel their concept of the morality of God had become degenerate.

The result was that the use of nay image or idol as a symbol for God's person was outlawed. From then on, worship would take place completely void of any visual personification of a person. . . . They knew that God was a man, but it was contrary to their law for them to portray Him as such through the use of any drawing, image or idol. They also knew that God was their father, and that of necessity He had a wife who was their mother, but it was against the law of Moses for them to acknowledge her existence in any of their cultic rituals. Hence, the worship of our Mother in Heaven was outlawed all together. The 16th chapter of Deuteronomy proclaims the new law: "Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to Yahweh your God, and do not erect a sacred stone, for these Yahweh your God hates."<sup>liii</sup>

And what did the Lord have in store for the Canaanites? The scriptures say that their cup was full to overflowing. "Thou shalt utterly destroy," the Lord said<sup>liv</sup>

But, as the Old Testament record faithfully attests, old ideas as basic to life and human nature as belief in a Mother in Heaven did not die easily! One would suppose from the Lord's devastating edict that Asherah worship would have come to a quick end, but it continued to flourish among the children of Israel for more than 600 years after they entered Canaan<sup>lv</sup> According to Raphael Patai, for hundreds of years the image of Asherah stood next to the altar of Yahweh/El in the temple and as such both Yahweh/El and Asherah were understood to be

Husband and Wife, the supreme God and Goddess of the universe. After rehearsing the whole history, Patai summarized his findings as follows:

We find that the worship of Asherah, which had been popular among the Hebrew tribes for three centuries, was introduced into the Jerusalem Temple by King Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, in or about 928 B.C. Her statue was worshiped in the Temple for 35 years, until King Asa removed it in 893 B.C. It was restored to the Temple by King Joash in 825 B.C. and remained there for a full century, until King Hezekiah removed it in 725 B.C. After an absence of 27 years, however, Asherah was back again in the Temple: This time it was King Manasseh who replaced her in 698 B.C. She remained in the Temple for 78 years, until the great reformer King Josiah removed her in 620 B.C. Upon Josiah's death eleven years later (609 B.C.), she was again brought back into the Temple where she remained until its destruction 23 years later, in 586 B.C. Thus it appears that of the 370 years during which the Solomonic Temple stood in Jerusalem, for no less than 236 years (or almost two-thirds of the time) the statue of Asherah was present in the Temple, and her worship was a part of the legitimate religion approved and led by the king, the court, and the priesthood and opposed by only a few prophetic voices crying out against it at relatively long intervals.<sup>lvi</sup>

Reference is made to the male and female Cherubim which were found in the Temple at Jerusalem at the time of its destruction. The Law of Moses forbade the making of any image in the likeness of God, and it would seem that the Jews got around this by making images of Cherubim. These were fifteen-foot tall winged humans who were plated with gold and set in the Holy of Holies. They were portrayed in sexual embrace, and it is thought by many that their purpose was to symbolize what in accordance with their own law, they could not portray through the use of an image of Yahweh/El and Asherah.<sup>lvii</sup>  
[Fred C. Collier, ""The Common Origin of Ancient Hebrew/Pagan Religion and the Demise of the Hebrew Goddess," in Doctrine of the Priesthood, Vol. 8, No. 2, February 199, pp. 9-11, 21-42]

Daniel Peterson notes that the great reforming king Hezekiah removed Asherah from the Temple, along with the so-called Nehushtan, which 2 Kings 18:4 describes as "the brasen serpent that Moses had made." The Nehushtan was not a pagan intrusion, but had been carefully preserved by the Israelites for nearly a millennium until Hezekiah, offended by the idolatrous worship of "the children of Israel [who] did burn incense to it" (2 Kings 18:4), removed it and destroyed it. In other words, the Nehushtan had an illustrious pedigree entirely within the religious world of Israel, and there is no reason to believe that the *asherah* was any different in this respect. Moreover, what is striking in the long story of Israel's Asherah is the identity of those who did not oppose her. No prophet appears to have denounced Asherah before the eighth century B.C. . . . What was the "asherah" that stood in the temple at Jerusalem and in Samaria? Asherah was associated with trees.<sup>lviii</sup> A 10th-century cultic stand from Ta'anach, near Megiddo, features two representations of Asherah; first in human form and then as a sacred tree. She is the tree.<sup>lix</sup>

Peterson adds that the menorah, the seven branched candelabrum that stood for centuries in the temple of Jerusalem, supplies an interesting parallel to all of this: Leon Yardmen maintains that the menorah represents a stylized almond tree. He points to the notably radiant whiteness of the almond tree at certain points in its life cycle. Yardmen also argues that the archaic Greek name of the almond (*amygdala*, reflected in its contemporary botanical designation *Amygdalin communis*), almost certainly not a native Greek word, is almost likely derived from the Hebrew *e gedolah*, meaning "Great Mother."<sup>x</sup>

[Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi & His Asherah," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, FARMS, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, pp. 19-20, 22] [See the commentary on Alma 7:10; Alma 39:3]

Warning\* Readers should be aware that in Peterson's original article which appeared in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World*, there is a footnote in which Peterson tries to disassociate himself from any false doctrine that might be implied by his article. The footnote reads as follows:

William J. Hamblin, Paul Y. Hoskisson, Dana M. Pike, Matthew Roper, and John A. Tvedtnes furnished several interesting references and, with Deborah D. Peterson, offered useful comments on earlier drafts of this essay. Of course, the author alone is responsible for the paper's arguments and conclusions.

So that there will be no mistake about my position, let me briefly speak rather more personally: this essay should not be misinterpreted as a brief for theological or ecclesiological innovation within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members of that church have long understood and accepted the idea of a divine Mother in Heaven. If further information or instruction relating to her is to be made public, my conviction is that this will come through revelation to the proper authorities, not through agitation nor even, in any significant way, through scholarship. Unless and until revelation dictates otherwise, I believe that we are to stay within the bounds set by our canonical scriptures on this matter. I suspect that the ancient notion of Asherah as the wife of El reflects true doctrine, albeit frequently garbled and corrupted. I suspect, furthermore, that it was such garbling and corruption that impelled the Deuteronomistic reformers, whom I believe to have been inspired, to oppose and suppress the veneration of Asherah, just as they opposed and suppressed the veneration of the Nehushtan of Moses. My suspicions are not, however, essential to the fundamental thesis of this paper, which is simply that the representation, by a tree, of a divine consort bearing a divine child--to us a rather unexpected juxtaposition--was intelligible to Nephi because, whatever his personal opinion of Asherah may have been, such symbolism was familiar to him. (Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, pp. 218-219)

Readers should also note that Fred Collier was excommunicated from the Church.

Furthermore, that the tree represents Christ is apparent from 1 Nephi 11:7: "And behold this thing shall be given unto thee for a sign, that after thou hast beheld the tree which bore the fruit which thy father tasted, thou shalt also behold a man descending out of heaven, and him shall ye witness; and after ye have witnessed him ye shall bear record that it is the Son of God." [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

Note\* The Book of Mormon claims that the ancient Americans were taught the gospel (for example, see 2 Nephi 30:5). Richardson, Richardson and Bentley write that one of the "mysteries" of the gospel is that we have a Mother in Heaven.\* This concept was first taught and publicly announced in *The Mormon* (August 29, 1857, pp. 348-351). It is also mentioned in an early poem by Eliza R. Snow called "O May Father," which was later set to music and has become a favorite LDS hymn.<sup>lxi</sup>

An evidence that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true church is the fact that the ancient Americans also believed in a Mother in Heaven. Though this concept is not mentioned in the Book of Mormon, it is an important principle of the eternal gospel that was taught in its fullness in ancient America. According to Laurette Sejourne, the ancient Americans believed in "a place where there are the great God and Goddess."<sup>lxii</sup>

Other ancient American documents speak of a heavenly Father and Mother of Life. According to the *Popol Vuh*, (a modern translation of the ancient history of the Quiche' Maya of Guatemala): "These are the names of the divinity, arranged in pairs of creators in accord with the dual conception of the Quiche': *Tzacol* and *Bitol*, *Creator* and *Maker*, . . . *Mother* and *Father*, they are the Great Father and the Great Mother, so called by the Indians, according to Las Casas; and they were in heaven."<sup>lxiii</sup>

\*The Latter-day Saint concept of a Mother in Heaven is that of a glorified, perfected, and eternal woman who has lived with The Father as His eternal companion from the beginning- -She is not Mary the mother of Jesus as taught by a few other religions. Likewise, Latter-day Saints do not worship, nor do they pray to Her.

[Allen H. Richardson, David E. Richardson and Anthony E. Bentley, 1000 Evidences for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Part Two-A Voice from the Dust: 500 Evidences in Support of the Book of Mormon, pp. 38-39]

### 1 Nephi 11:25 **The Tree of Life:**

Hugh Nibley describes a picture in his possession from the Dura-Europos Synagogue, the oldest Jewish building known in the world. It was discovered a few years ago and excavated at Dura-Europos on the Tigris, well into Asia there. It's a third-century synagogue, the oldest one known. Here is the tree of life, and it's bearing all sorts of fruit. Under it are Isaac [he probably means Jacob] and the twelve tribes of Israel. Here is Joseph blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, or

Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau. Here are the Twelve. Here is the Orphic figure who is playing music of beautiful harmony. The tree is full of animals. There are birds and animals. All creatures are being fed on the fruit of the tree. This is the tree of life, and it is right over the main shrine (this is where the Shrine of the Torah was) of this very ancient synagogue--the oldest Jewish church we know of. Right over it is this tree of life with all the symbolism that is brought out by Nephi here. Nobody knew anything about this until 1940 when the Dura-Europos was discovered. It told us all sorts of things about the Jews we didn't know before. But notice what an important position they give to the tree of life. Here are the twelve sons of Israel surrounding Jacob, or Israel.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, pp. 171-172]

### 1 Nephi 11:25 **The Fountain of Living Waters, or . . . the Tree of Life:**

In Lehi's dream, at the end of the strait and narrow path were both the tree of life *and* a "fountain of living waters" (1 Nephi 11:25). According to McConkie and Millet, the words of Jehovah through his servant Jeremiah are particularly insightful in identifying Christ himself with this joint symbol. "My people have committed two evils," the Lord said anciently, for "they have forsaken *me the fountain of living waters*, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13; italics added)

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 81]

### 1 Nephi 11:25 **The Fountain of Living Waters:**

The fountain of living waters is a symbol as significant as the tree of life. If one drinks from the fountain of living waters, one will live forever with the blessings of eternal life. If one partakes of the tree of life, one receives the same blessing. They both represent the love of God for his children. This fountain of living waters is a part of the great, celestialized city of Jerusalem which John the revelator saw, For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes (Rev 7:17). John was shown the close relationship between the celestial tree of life and the fountain of living waters, 'he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life...let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev 22:1-2,17).

These waters are separate from the river described by Lehi and Nephi. The river was filthy and is representative of the depths of hell.

Merrill J. Bateman writes:

“Another indication that the ‘love of God’ refers to Christ is the reference to the fountain. The ‘fountain of living water’ symbol in the scriptures refers to Jehovah or Jesus. Jehovah lamented the fact that the Jewish nation had forsaken Him, ‘the fountain of living waters’ (Jer. 2:13). Jesus offered living water to the woman of Samaria at the well. Not understanding, she told Him that the well was deep and that He did not have anything with which to draw. He then said: ‘Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ (John 4:10-14.) The ‘fountain of living water’ is a type of Christ as the source of life with regard to both immortality and eternal life.” (*Heroes from the Book of Mormon*, p. 23.)

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]



1 Nephi 11:25 **The tree of life (Illustration):** Torah-shrine and symbolic tree in the ancient synagogue of Dura Europos. [Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, p. 190]

1 Nephi 11:25 **The Word of God:**

In 1 Nephi 11:25 we find "the Word of God" being equated with "The Fountain of Living Waters" and "The Tree of Life" and "The Love of God."

According to Michael Griffith, anti-Mormons assert that the Book of Mormon contains almost no Mormonism" (Decker and Hunt 114). By this the critics mean to claim that none or almost none of the more unique doctrines of Mormonism can be found in the Nephite record (Decker and Hunt 114; J.L. Smith 23-30). . . . [One of these allegations involves the preexistence and the doctrine of "the Word"]

In John 1:1-14 we find set forth the doctrine of the divinization of "the Word" (or Logos). In the Ebla tablets, which date to around 2500 B.C., we also find the concept of the divinized Word. Mitchell Dahood says the following:

From the biblical point of view, perhaps the most dramatic place name [in the Ebla tablets] is MEE 1,6523 = TM.76.G.525 rev. VII *e-da-bar-ki*, *Temple of the World*,"

*wherein da-bar is equated with the Hebrew (and rarely Phoenician) dabar, "word."* In other terms, the Word, the Logos, was already divinized in third-millennium Canaan . . . . (Mitchell Dahood, "The Temple and Other Sacred Places in the Ebla Tablets," in Truman Madsen, editor, *The Temple in Antiquity*, 1984:86)

[Michael T. Griffith, Refuting the Critics, p. 101] [See the commentary on Alma 5:34; Helaman 5:47]

**1 Nephi 11:25 The Tree of Life Was a Representation of the Love of God:**

Brant Gardner notes that Nephi had asked to do two things, to see what his father saw, and to understand the meaning of it. The angel proceeds to provide the answer to both requests simultaneously. Nephi beings to be carefully walked through the vision, but the meaning is inextricably woven into the vision itself. Rather than symbol only, Nephi sees precisely how Christ is the meaning of the dream, and the symbols are explicated by their relevance to the life and mission of the Savior: "and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God." [Brant Gardner, "Book of Mormon Commentary," 1Nephi/1Nephi11.htm, p. 9]

**1 Nephi 11:27 I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world (Illustration):** Christ [Gary Kapp, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 2]

**1 Nephi 11:27 I Also Beheld the Prophet Who Should Prepare the Way before Him:**

[See the commentary on 1 Nephi 10:8]

**1 Nephi 11:27 In the Form of a Dove:**

[See the commentary (Andrew Skinner) on Helaman 8:14]

**1 Nephi 11:32-33 I . . . Beheld the Lamb of God . . . Was Lifted up upon the Cross and Slain for the Sins of the World:**

Donna Nielsen notes that the last night that Christ spent with his disciples was during Passover, a beautiful feast celebrated by the Jews to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt, slavery, and death. The Passover meal had several elements, the main one being roasted lamb. The lamb was prepared according to very strict specifications. The lamb had to pass an

exacting inspection by the priests, so that it was found to have no fault or blemish. It had to be roasted whole in an upright position, and this was done by making a stand with branches from a pomegranate tree lashed together in the shape of the ancient Hebrew letter Tav (+). The lamb was roasted in an especially constructed oven. It was forbidden to break any bones of the roasted sacrificial lamb.

[Donna B. Nielsen, Beloved Bridegroom: Finding Christ in Ancient Jewish Marriage and Family Customs, p. 116]

#### 1 Nephi 11:32 **The Son of the Everlasting God:**

According to McConkie and Millet, the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon reads as follows: "And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people, yea, *the everlasting God* was judged of the world." Again (like in 1 Nephi 11:18), this change was the case of editorial insertion by Joseph Smith.

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 83] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 11:18]

#### 1 Nephi 12:4 **I Heard Thunderings:**

The dramatic catastrophes in the New World that attended the crucifixion of Christ were prophesied 600 years before by Nephi in 1 Nephi 12:2-6. Jeff Lindsay writes that unknown to Joseph Smith and still unknown to most LDS people, it appears that Nephi was not the only ancient prophet who knew of the dramatic upheavals in nature that would accompany the crucifixion of Christ. And Nephi was not the only prophet who gave detailed prophecies about the mission and life of Christ.

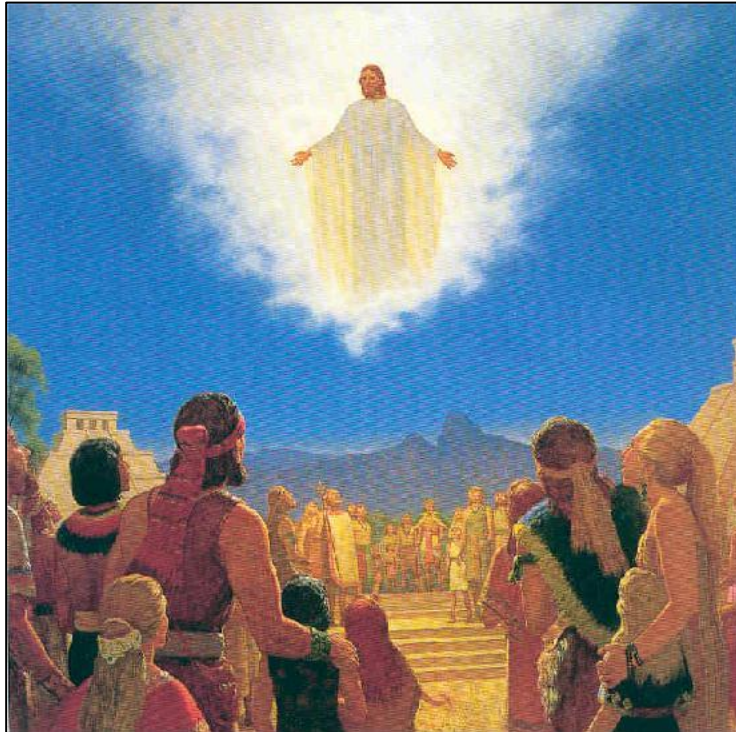
An ancient document, the *Book of the Rolls*<sup>lxiv</sup> contains a remarkable prophecy said to be from Adam to correlates well with the Book of Mormon. In this document, Adam is told that Christ would come to earth and be born of a virgin named Mary. Christ long before his mortal birth, tells Adam:

I will come down to thee, and in thy house will I dwell and with thy body will I be clothed. . . . I will fast forty days; . . . I will receive baptism; . . . I will be lifted up on the cross; . . . I will endure lies; . . . I will be beaten with the whip; . . . I will taste vinegar; . . . my hands will be nailed; . . . I will be pierced with a spear; . . . *I will thunder in the height; . . . I will darken the sun; . . . I will cleave the rocks; . . .* after three days, which I have spent in the grave, I will raise up the body which I took from thee. (Book of the Rolls in Gibson, f.100b-101a, p. 16)

The details about thundering, darkening the sun, and cleaving the rocks are reported



prominently in the Book of Mormon (Helaman 14:20-22; 3 Nephi 8:17-20; and 1 Nephi 12:4). The Bible briefly mentions three hours of darkness and say that the earth quaked and the rocks rent (Matthew 27), but makes no mention of thundering. Thus the ancient *Book of the Rolls* lends plausibility to detailed prophecies of Christ in the Book of Mormon and is consistent with the prophecy of Nephi about violent manifestations in nature at the time Christ was crucified. [Jeff Lindsay, "Concerning Nephi's Detailed Prophecy about the Catastrophe," in *Book of Mormon Evidences*, [jefflindsay.com/BMEvidences.shtml](http://jefflindsay.com/BMEvidences.shtml), Jan 7, 2001]



**1 Nephi 12:6 I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven (Illustration):** "Behold I Am Jesus Christ." Nephi saw in vision that the resurrected Lord would appear on the American continent. Artist: Gary Kapp. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 32]

**1 Nephi 12:8 The Twelve Disciples of the Lamb:**

What is the difference between a disciple and an apostle?

James E. Talmage writes:

“Discipleship is general; any follower of a man or devotee to a principle may be called a disciple, The Holy Apostleship is an office and calling belonging to the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, at once exalted and specific, comprising as a distinguishing function that of personal and special witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ as the one

and only Redeemer and Savior of mankind. The apostleship is an individual bestowal, and as such is conferred only through ordination. That the Twelve did constitute a council or 'quorum' having authority in the Church established by Jesus Christ is shown by their ministrations after the Lord's resurrection and ascension.

"...The word 'apostle' is an Anglicized form derived from the Greek apostolos, meaning literally 'one who is sent,' and connoting an envoy or official messenger, who speaks and acts by the authority of one superior to himself." (Jesus the Christ, p. 227-8)

Joseph Fielding Smith writes:

"Question: 'In our class the question was asked if the twelve chosen by the Savior among the Nephites were apostles? At the same time the apostles chosen by Jesus in Palestine were on the earth the Lord chose twelve also on the American continent whom he called disciples. I have felt that there could not be more than one set of apostles on the earth at any given time, but some members of the class thought otherwise, and we have been confused.'

"Answer: The twelve men chosen by our Savior among the Nephites are called disciples in the Book of Mormon...[1 Ne. 12:8-10 is quoted]

"In fulfilment of this prophecy when the Savior came to the Nephites, he chose twelve men and gave them authority to minister in his name among the Nephites on this American continent in all the ordinances essential to their salvation. These twelve went forth healing the sick and performing many miracles and administering the ordinances as they had been commanded to do. The fulness of the gospel with the power and the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood were given to the Nephites the same as they were to the Church on the Eastern Hemisphere

"While in every instance the Nephite twelve are spoken of as disciples, the fact remains that they had been endowed with divine authority to be special witnesses for Christ among their own people. Therefore, they were virtually apostles to the Nephite race, although their jurisdiction was, as revealed to Nephi, eventually to be subject to the authority and jurisdiction of Peter and the twelve chosen in Palestine. According to the definition prevailing in the world an apostle is a witness for Christ, or one who evangelizes a certain nation or people. 'A zealous advocate of a doctrine or cause.' Therefore the Nephite twelve became apostles, as special witnesses, just as did Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times." (Answers to Gospel Questions, 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-1966], 1: 120-122.)

[\[josephsmith.com.1nephi\]](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)

**1 Nephi 12:9 The Twelve Apostles . . . Shall Judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel . . . Twelve Ministers Shall Judge Thy Seed:**

We often imagine that Jesus Christ will be our judge. In John 5:22 we learn that the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. The Son, however, has committed judgment unto others. The Father delegated the responsibility to the Son, and the Son delegated the responsibility to the twelve apostles and twelve disciples. These 24 men, and others, will judge mankind under the direction of the Savior. This was made clear when the Lord spoke to Peter in Matt 19:28, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

In Revelation we learn that the books were opened....and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev 20:12). The Father is responsible for writing the books, the Savior is responsible for establishing the pattern by which men should be judged, and the Savior's apostles/disciples are the actual judges. This pattern is shown in 3 Ne 27:25-27. This prompted the counsel to the twelve disciples, Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am. The scriptures are replete with confirmations that this judgment will be just, But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth (Rom 2:2), Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments (Rev 16:7).

Who else will be a judge?

(1) Bishops, stake presidencies, and higher church councils act as judges on matters under their administration (DC 107:69-80).

(2) When missionaries are rejected and perform the ordinance of dusting off their feet, they will act as judges for the people who rejected their message (DC 75:19-22).

(3) The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment against the people who rejected Christ during his ministry because they [the men of Ninevah] repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here (Matt 12:41).

(4) Paul says that the saints will also judge the world, Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (1 Cor 6:2)

Bruce R. McConkie writes:

“Under Christ a great hierarchy of judges will operate, each functioning in his assigned sphere. John saw many judges sitting upon thrones. (Rev. 20:4.) Paul said the saints

would judge both the world and angels. (1 Cor. 6:2-3.) The elders are to sit in judgment on those who reject them. (D. & C. 75:21-22; Matt. 10:14-15.) Daniel saw that judgment would be given to the saints. (Dan. 7:22.) The Nephite Twelve will be judged by the Twelve from Jerusalem and then in turn will judge the Nephite nation. (1 Ne. 12:9-10; 3 Ne. 27:27; Morm. 3:19.) And the Twelve who served with our Lord in his ministry shall judge the whole house of Israel. (D. & C. 29:12.) No doubt there will be many others of many dispensations who will sit in judgment upon the peoples of their days and generations—all judging according to the judgment which Christ shall give them, 'which shall be just.' (3 Ne. 27:27.)" (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:558.)

[\[josephsmith.com.1nephi\]](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)

### 1 Nephi 12:9 **Thou . . . Thy Seed . . . Ye (Enallage):**

According to Kevin Barney, the term *enallage* is Greek for "interchange," and refers to a syntactic device that is fairly common in the Old Testament, where an author intentionally shifts from the singular to the plural (or vice versa) for rhetorical effect. . . .

A good example is found in Genesis 17. In the first eight verses of Genesis 17, God is speaking to Abraham and establishing his covenant with him. The verbs in this section are for the most part first-person singulars (such as "I will make," "have I made thee," "I will make thee," "I will establish my covenant," "I will give unto thee," and "I will be their God"). In verse 9, the subject of the verse shifts from a first-person singular "I" (referring to God) to a second-person singular "thou" (referring to Abraham) in "*thou* shalt keep my covenant." This shift is emphatic. . . . Finally, God addresses both Abraham and his seed together in the second-person plural: "which *ye* shall keep." Genesis 17:9-13 reads as follows:

And God said unto Abraham, *Thou* shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generation. This is my covenant, which *ye* shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

These verses follow the following pattern:

1. A divine being or a prophet directly addresses an individual (here it is God speaking

to Abraham).

2. He addresses the individual in the second-person singular, "thou."
3. He makes a third-person reference to that individual's posterity, "thy seed."
4. Finally, he directly addresses the individual and his posterity together in the second-person plural, "ye."

In the Book of Mormon this same pattern of enallage can be found in 1 Nephi 12:9, 2 Nephi 1:31-32, and 2 Nephi 3:1-2. . . . In 1 Nephi 12:9 the word *ye* is a plural referring not just to Nephi, but to Nephi and his posterity:

And he said unto me: *Thou* rememberest the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Behold they are they who shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, the twelve ministers of *thy seed* shall be judged of them; for *ye* are of the house of Israel.

In 2 Nephi 1:31-32, the word *ye* is a plural referring not just to Zoram, but to Zoram, Nephi, and their respective posterities. In 2 Nephi 3:1-2, the word *ye* is a plural referring not just to Joseph, but to Joseph, his brethren, and their respective posterities. [Kevin L. Barney, "Divine Discourse Directed at a Prophet's Posterity in the Plural: Further Light on Enallage," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, 6/2 1997, pp. 229-234.

#### 1 Nephi 12:11 **Their Garments Were White Even Like unto the Lamb of God:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, the expressions "their garments are made white in his blood" (1 Nephi 12:10) and "these are made white in the blood of the Lamb" (1 Nephi 12:11) are also found in the Revelation of John (Revelation 7:14), where the angel explains that the multitudes standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, are they which came out of great tribulation and now are serving God day and night in his temple. They, too, "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Therefore they are before the throne of God.

This exceedingly solemn imagery recalls to our minds the sacrifices of the pre-Christian dispensations, and particularly the sacrificial rite on the Day of Atonement under the Mosaic law. That was a day of fasting, confession of sins and atonement, followed by rejoicing.

On that day Aaron, or whoever held the office of high priest, clean and attired in priestly robes, came to the Sanctuary with a young bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. These he offered and thus made atonement for himself and his house. Some of the blood he sprinkled upon the mercy seat, i.e. the covering of the ark in the Holy of Holies. He was now prepared to officiate as mediator between God and the people.

In this office he presented two goats before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of

the congregation. By lot one was selected to be the Lord's; the other to be the "scapegoat." The high priest now laid his hands on the scapegoat and thereby transferred symbolically the sins of the people upon him. The animal dedicated to the Lord was slain as a sin offering. The scapegoat was led into the wilderness and set free. And thus an atonement was made for the Priest and the sanctuary and for the entire people. According to the Talmud, in the evening the maidens all went forth arrayed in white garments, into the vineyards, where they rejoiced, singing and dancing, and inviting the young men to come and select their brides. They had, figuratively speaking, washed their clothes and made them white in the blood of the lamb, the prototype of our Lord, the Lamb of God. Their sins had been confessed, atoned for and forgiven. . . .

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, pp. 108-109]

#### 1 Nephi 12:16 **Filthy Water . . . the River:**

Hugh Nibley says that when Lehi dreams of a river, it is a true desert river, a clear stream a few yards wide with its source but a hundred paces away (1 Nephi 8:13-14) or else a raging muddy wash, a *sayl* of "filthy water" that sweeps people away to their destruction (1 Nephi 8:32, 12:16, 15:27). In the year A.D. 960, according to Bar Hebraeus, a large band of pilgrims were returning from Mekka and "encamped in the bed of a brook in which water had not flowed for a long time, and during the night, whilst they were sleeping, a flood of water poured down upon them all, and it swept them and all their possessions out into the Great Sea, and they all perished." Even a mounted rider if he is careless may be caught off guard and carried away by such a sudden spate of "head water," according to Doughty. One of the worst place for the gully-washing torrents of liquid mud is in "the scarred and bare mountains which run parallel to the west coast of Arabia; . . . the rainstorms beat against this long ridge and produce almost in a moment raging torrents--the Arabic *sayl*, spate--which sweep away all obstacles without warning and with loss of life of man and cattle." This was the very region through which Lehi traveled on his great trek.

The springhead and the *sayl*, such are the two and only types of "river" (for he calls them rivers) known to the desert Arab.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 45]

#### 1 Nephi 12:16 **The Fountain of Filthy Water (Potter):**

In his dream, Lehi describes a river as being both near a tree and having its head a little way off. It would therefore seem to be a life-giving stream which starts in a valley and does not flow into the valley from some other location. Additionally, Nephi later tells us that this river was "a representation of the love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25) Yet the river is described differently

in other parts of the dream narrative. Nephi writes "the water which my father saw was filthiness; and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water" (1 Nephi 15:26, 27). Also "the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell" (1 Nephi 12:16).

According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, there would seem to be some contradiction here. One might ask how the river can be both a representation of the love of God and at the same time the depths of hell? These two definitions would seem to be mutually exclusive. Our view is that the river was seen in two contrasting stages. The first stage is of a clear stream which gave life to the valley (Wadi Tayyib al-Isim), the second a raging flash flood which destroyed all before it sweeping everything into the depths of the Gulf of Aqaba.

The canyon at the end of wadi Tayyib al-Isim is the only outlet to the coast from the watershed of 105 square miles of mountains. If this dream took place after the date harvest (since Lehi saw dates or white fruit in his dream) and towards the beginning of the winter it would be an obvious concern to Lehi that any early rains could provide a flashflood from which there could be no escape for man nor beast alike, sweeping them toward the Gulf. The Gulf of Aqaba is referred to in the text as "the fountain of the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 2:9). The Gulf has a depth of 6,000 feet, the drop is precipitous--only a few feet away from the coral reef and shallow water, submerged cliff faces drop off hundreds of feet. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 60-61, 65]

**1 Nephi 12:18 A Great and Terrible Gulf Divideth Them: Yea; Even the Word of the Justice of the Eternal God:**

The Doctrine & Covenants teaches that the individual must be able to abide the law of the kingdom he/she enters, 'For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory' (D&C 88:22). A corollary to this principle is taught by Moroni, 'Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell' (Mormon 9:3-4).

Therefore, the justice of God is actually merciful in requiring that the righteous and wicked be separated. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, this same gulf is described separating those in Spirit Prison from those in Spirit Paradise, 'between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence' (Luke 16:26).

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

[See the commentary on Alma 42:25-28 Alma's son Corianton had trouble with this concept].

### 1 Nephi 12:18 **A Great and Terrible Gulf:**

Hugh Nibley believes that to symbolize what is utterly inaccessible, Lehi is shown "a great and terrible gulf" (1 Nephi 12:18), "an awful gulf" (1 Nephi 15:28), a tremendous chasm with one's objective (the tree of life) maddeningly visible on the other side. All who have traveled in the desert know the feeling of utter helplessness and frustration at finding one's way suddenly cut off by one of those appalling canyons with perpendicular sides. Nothing could be more abrupt, more absolute, more baffling to one's plans, and so will it be with the wicked in a day of reckoning.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 46]

### 1 Nephi 12:18 **A Great and a Terrible Gulf Divideth Them (Potter):**

Nephi associates the large and spacious building (1 Nephi 8:26; 12:18) in which vain worldly people mocked the righteous with a "great and terrible gulf" (1 Nephi 12:18) or "awful gulf" (1 Nephi 15:28). Regarding this gulf Hugh Nibley writes:

a tremendous chasm with one's objective (the tree of life) maddeningly visible on the other side; all who have traveled in the desert know the feeling of utter helplessness and frustration at finding one's way suddenly cut off by one of those appalling canyons with perpendicular sides.<sup>lxv</sup>

Corbin T. Volluz describes the river in Lehi's dream "cutting through the chasms and gorges of the Grand Canyon, so as to create a great gulf of division."<sup>lxvi</sup> Thus George Potter and Richard Wellington note that these two writers also associate the vertical walls of a canyon with the image of a "gulf," exactly what is found in wadi Tayyib al-Isim.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 63-64] [See the Potter commentary on 1 Nephi 8:26]





1 Nephi 12:18 **A great and terrible gulf divideth them (Potter) [Illustration]:** Canyon walls near opening, George standing in the lighted area of the canyon floor.  
[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, p. 18, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 12:18 **A Terrible Gulf Divideth them; Yea, Even the [S]word of the Justice of the Eternal God:**

We should take note that the original text of the Book of Mormon described the "terrible gulf" which divided them as the "sword of the justice of the eternal God" and not "the word of the justice . . ." Apparently Oliver Cowdery made an error when copying the word "sword" from the original text onto the printer's copy.

[Royal Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript" in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1998, p. 31]

1 Nephi 12:18 **And The Messiah [Jesus Christ] Who Is the Lamb of God:**

The restoration of the name Jesus Christ from the Original and Printers Manuscript makes this the first mention of the name of Jesus in the Book of Mormon. Nephi tells us that the name of the Messiah was revealed to him by an angel (2 Nephi 25:19).

[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 24] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 10:3]

**1 Nephi 12:20-21 They Went Forth in Multitudes . . . and I Saw Wars and Rumors of Wars:**

In a great vision concerning the future of his seed, and the seed of his brethren, Nephi saw the people of the seed of my brethren that they had overcome my seed; and they went forth in multitudes upon the face of the land. And I saw them gathered together in multitudes; and I saw wars and rumors of wars among them . . . (1 Nephi 12:20-21)

According to Michael Griffith, the Book of Mormon's references to great concentrations of population in ancient Mesoamerica have been strikingly vindicated by modern research (Raymond Treat ed., *Recent Book of Mormon Developments*, Vol. II, pp. 11-13; Vern Elefson, "Speculations on Book of Mormon Populations," in *Recent Book of Mormon Developments*, pp. 30-33). John Sorenson discusses some of the evidence of the Nephite record's references to large populations:

Population studies are not, of course, based upon speculation or interpretative whim. As historical and archaeological sources are more carefully examined and the specialists correct each other by mutual criticism, a better grasp of the real numbers is emerging. William Deveau's 1976 volume, *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, weighted all the arguments. His estimated total of 57 million for the hemisphere [before the time of Columbus] seems fairly safe. He concluded that Mexico and Central America had some 27 million. Moreover, according to Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, who used native documents as sources for his post Conquest history of central Mexico, the "Toltecs" of the tenth century carried on wars with forces in the millions and suffered over 5.6 million dead. Even discounting for possible exaggeration, such numbers are not outside the range of the reasonable. Neither are the 230,000 warrior casualties attributed to the Nephites six hundred years earlier. (See Mormon 6:10-15) The figures on Mesoamerican population offered by demographers decades ago could not be reconciled with statements in the Book of Mormon about millions of people being destroyed in the concluding Jaredite and Nephite wars. Now, analysis of the data on lands occupied, ecology, sizes, war casualties, and other population-related factors in the Book of Mormon text shows striking consistency and realism in the reported demographic changes. At the same time, the absolute numbers reported in the book are of the same order of magnitude as the figures which current research on Mesoamerica finds acceptable. (John L. Sorenson, "Digging Into the Book of Mormon," in the *Ensign*, September 1984, 33)

[Michael T. Griffith, Refuting the Critics, pp. 55-56]

## 1 Nephi 13-22 (Structural Purpose)

Nephi makes dual mention of the Lord's "marvelous work": in chapter 14 of 1 Nephi and also in chapter 22 (see 1 Nephi 14:7; 1 Nephi 22:8). According to Avraham Gileadi, that twofold mention accords with the prophetic idea of a twofold witness. But more than that, Nephi gives us the opportunity to discover other things about the Lord's "marvelous work" by comparing his two sequences. . . . A reassuring thing about studying the scriptures is that we rarely find isolated words or expressions. Instead, the scriptures provide us with *patterns* of things. . . . The prophet Nephi knew what he meant and he imbedded the meaning in his writings. . . . According to this topological mindset, so characteristic of all the holy prophets, "what has been shall be" constituted a manner of prophesying (compare Ecclesiastes 1:9; 3 Nephi 23:3). What was past, the prophets invariably used as a type of the future; and what was future they described in terms of the past. Such an approach to prophecy placed them under constraint to use language consistently. That consistency with words gave the reader a proper sense of what the future might hold. It linked the past and the future in one continuum. . . . Thus, a key to the great and marvelous work of the last days--its nature and timing--is given in the Book of Mormon in the very way its authors use those words. . . . for the times of the Gentiles which leads up to the restoration of the gospel among them. . . . Nephi goes on to describe events that follow the restoration of the gospel. . . . which include the "great and marvelous work," which causes an irrevocable division between those who will be saved and those who will be damned (1 Nephi 14:7). . . .

Nephi picks up his latter-day theme again several chapters later, in 1 Nephi 22. He again predicts, in order:

- the maturation of the mighty nation of America among the Gentiles and its scattering of Lehi's descendants (1 Nephi 22:7);
- the "marvelous work" among the Gentiles (1 Nephi 22:8-11);
- the fulfillment of the Lord's covenants with the house of Israel in bringing them out of bondage, both physical and spiritual, and gathering them to their lands of inheritance (1 Nephi 22:12);
- the wrath of God descending on the nations of the earth (1 Nephi 22:13-16);
- the Lord's deliverance of the righteous by his power (1 Nephi 22:17-24); and
- the Lord's millennial reign as Israel's divine King (1 Nephi 22:24-28).

By comparing Nephi's two sequences of events (1 Nephi 14 and 22), we thus learn that the Lord's great and marvelous work involves the destruction of the wicked and the restoration of the righteous of the Lord's people. . . . Nephi, however, teaches much more about the Lord's great and marvelous work than just providing us with two complementary sequences of events. Let's look for instance, at what he has to say in the chapters that separate his two sequences. First, we find five biographical chapters (1 Nephi 15-19) . . . let's refer to these five chapters as the "journeying narratives." Next, Nephi includes two chapters from the book of Isaiah (1 Nephi

20-21; compare Isaiah 48-49), which speak of the destruction of the wicked and of the gathering and restoration of the tribes of Israel at the same time (1 Nephi 20:18--21:26; compare Isaiah 48:18--49:26). A closer look at this intervening material thus reveals that Nephi places the two Isaiah chapters strategically. By means of the Isaiah material, Nephi seems to be telling us about the great and marvelous work without directly mentioning it.

By the same token, the journeying narratives, which come just before the Isaiah material, provide important information. They show *how* the Lord delivers the righteous of his people from destruction in a day of great judgment and restores them to a land of inheritance (1 Nephi 15-19). These turn out to be the very kinds of events Nephi associates with the Lord's marvelous work (see 1 Nephi 22:8-12). In other words, the journeying narratives and the Isaiah chapters resemble each other in an important respect: each describes the same kinds of restorative events, one by way of narrative, the other by way of prophecy.

When we examine the journeying narratives and the Isaiah chapters more closely, we find that everything Nephi includes between the first and second versions of his prophetic sequence pertains to that sequence. . . . The narratives *foreshadow* what will befall Israel in the last days, while the Isaiah chapters prophesy it directly. . . . Far from being a loose arrangement of material, Nephi's entire account is organized into a sophisticated literary structure. In keeping with Hebrew stylistic method, Nephi has arranged his material so that its very organization reveals a prophetic message. By its means he tells us things he could not tell us another way (see 1 Nephi 14:25,28). . . .

As the climax, or centerpiece, of Nephi's sequence, the great and marvelous work deserved to be detailed somewhere. Nephi accomplished this structurally by giving us two versions of his sequence that highlight the great and marvelous work, and then interposing the journeying narratives and the Isaiah chapters between the two.

[Avraham Gileadi, The Last Days: Types and Shadows from the Bible and the Book of Mormon, pp. 55-68]

### 1 Nephi 13:1-3 **Other Nations:**

According to John Sorenson, most Latter-day Saint readers have supposed that the "other nations" (1 Nephi 13:1-3) in Nephi's vision who overran the promised land after Columbus' discovery were the European "Gentiles." But does it make sense that the fate prophesied by Lehi would be delayed until 1,100 years after Cumorah? "Many nations" nearby in the Americas could have entered the lands of the American Israelite groups on short notice. Linguistic reconstruction tells us about one of the later groups--Nahua speakers, which included the Aztecs. None of them came into Mesoamerica until after the Book of Mormon account had been sealed up, yet soon they came to dominate much of the area.

[John Sorenson, An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., p. 84]

### 1 Nephi 13:3 **The Nations and Kingdoms of the Gentiles:**

McConkie and Millet assert that for the Nephites, "Jews" are nationals, persons from the kingdom of Judah (See 2 Nephi 30:4; 33:8). On the other hand, "the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 13:3) are persons from elsewhere. In this sense, the Latter-day Saints are called Gentiles (see D&C 109:60). In this vision the "nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles" are the European nations.

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 89]

### 1 Nephi 13:5 **The Great and Abominable Church:**

Bruce R. McConkie writes:

"Nephi saw the 'church which is most abominable above all other churches' in vision. He 'saw the devil that he was the foundation of it'; and also the murders, wealth, harlotry, persecutions, and evil desires that are part of this organization (1 Ne 13:1-10)

"He saw that this church took away from the gospel of the Lamb many covenants and many plain and precious parts; that it perverted the right ways of the Lord; that it deleted many teachings from the Bible; that it was 'the mother of harlots'; and finally that the Lord would again restore the gospel of salvation. (1 Ne. 13:24-42.)

"Similar visions were given to John as recorded in the 17th and 18th chapters of Revelation. He saw this evil church as a whole ruling over peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues; as being full of blasphemy abominations, filthiness, and fornication; as having the name, 'MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH'; as drunken with the blood of the saints; as revelling in wealth and the delicacies of the earth; as making merchandise of all costly items and of 'slaves, and souls of men.' And then John, as did Nephi, saw the fall and utter destruction of this great church whose foundation is the devil.

"In this world of carnality and sensuousness, the great and abominable church will continue its destructive course. But there will be an eventual future day when evil shall end, 'and the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire.' (D. & C. 29:21; Ezek. 38; 39; 1 Ne. 22:23; Rev. 18.) Before that day, however, desolations will sweep through the earth and the various branches of the great and abominable church 'shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood.' (1 Ne. 22:13-14; 14:3.)"

[Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, pp.138-139]

## 1 Nephi 13:6 **I Beheld This Great and Abominable Church:**

According to Stephen Robinson, in 1 Nephi 13-14, the prophet Nephi relates a vision in which he saw the future of the world and its kingdoms as it related to his posterity. Nephi's vision is the type of revelation known in biblical literature as apocalyptic, a type represented in the New Testament most fully by the revelation of John. The two revelations have more in common, though than apocalyptic form, for they both deal in part with an often misunderstood concept; the great and abominable church of the devil. The visions together give us prophetic information about the matter.

The major characteristics of the "great and abominable church" (1 Nephi 13:6) described in 1 Nephi may be listed as follows:

1. It persecutes, tortures, and slays the Saints of God (see 1 Nephi 13:5).
2. It seeks wealth and luxury (see 1 Nephi 13:7-8).
3. It is characterized by sexual immorality (see 1 Nephi 13:7).
4. It has excised plain and precious things from the scriptures (see 1 Nephi 13:26-29).
5. It has dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people (see 1 Nephi 14:11).
6. Its fate is to be consumed by a world war, when the nations it incites against the Saints war among themselves until the great and abominable church itself is destroyed (see 1 Nephi 22:13-14).

Five of the six characteristics identified in 1 Nephi are also attributed to Babylon in the book of Revelation. . . . The one characteristic not common to both prophetic descriptions is Nephi's statement that the great and abominable church has held back important parts of the canon of scripture. This omission in Revelation is not surprising since John's record is one of the scriptures Nephi says was tampered with (see 1 Nephi 14:23-24).

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in understanding Nephi's description of the great and abominable church is what seems to be a contradiction between chapter 13 and chapter 14. In 1 Nephi 13 the great and abominable church is one specific church among many--"most abominable above all other churches" (1 Nephi 13:5) . . . The apparent contradiction comes in 1 Nephi 14:10, in which we are told that the devil's church consists of all those organizations not associated with the Church of Jesus Christ: "Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil."

How can this be? . . . The answer is that the term "great and abominable church" is used in two different ways in 1 Nephi 13-14. In chapter 13 it is used historically, and in chapter 14 it is used typologically. In apocalyptic literature--remember that both Revelation and 1 Nephi 13-

14 are apocalyptic in nature--the seer is caught up in vision and sees things from God's perspective. Time ceases to be an important element; this is one reason the chronology in Revelation at times seems to be scrambled: with God there is no time as we reckon it (see Alma 40:8). Thus apocalyptic visions are highly symbolic . . . Once we understand that the term *great and abominable church* has two uses, the one historical and the other archetypal, the rest becomes easier. . . .

Because apocalyptic literature is dualistic, it deals with types; everything boils down to opposing principles: love and hate, good and evil, light and dark. There are no gray areas in apocalyptic writing. In this sense "there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil" (1 Nephi 14:10). . . .

Clearly whatever denominational name we choose to give it, the earliest apostate church and the great and abominable church that Nephi and John describe are identical. The fact is, we don't really know what name to give it. I have proposed Hellenized Christianity, but that is a description rather than a name.

The historical abominable church of the devil is that apostate church that replaced true Christianity in the first and second centuries, teaching the philosophies of men mingled with scriptures. It dethroned God in the church and replaced him with man by denying the principle of revelation and turning instead to human intellect. As the product of human agency, its creeds were an abomination to the Lord, for they were idolatry: men worshipping the creations, not of their own hands, but of their own minds.

[Stephen E. Robinson, "Nephi's "Great and Abominable Church," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 7/1, 1998, pp. 34-39] [See also Stephen E. Robinson, "Early Christianity and 1 Nephi 13-14," in The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation, pp. 177-191]

#### 1 Nephi 13:6 **The Great and Abominable Church:**

According to John Tvedtnes, the Gog and Magog prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39 is paralleled by John's writings in Revelation 17-20 concerning his vision, part of which speak about the great "whore," the "mother of harlots" (Revelation 17:1-6, 15-18) which falls (Revelation 18:1-3) and whose "smoke rose up for ever and ever" (Revelation 19:1-3). It seems that John either borrowed words from the writings of Ezekiel or else they both experienced the same vision.

Another prophet who experienced the same vision as John was the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, who, having been informed that John would record the vision, was told to write only part of what he saw (1 Nephi 14:25-28). So it is noteworthy that Nephi, in writing of his vision, not only refers to the great "whore" (1 Nephi 14:10-12), but employs the term "great and abominable church" (1 Nephi 13:6-8, 26-28; 14:3, 9, 15-17; 22:13-14; 2 Nephi 6:12; 28:18-19) in reference to that term.

With these facts in mind, it is most interesting that in the Doctrine & Covenants 29:21, we read that "the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire, *according as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet.*" (emphasis added) While the "great and abominable church" is described by Nephi, this term is not used in the biblical book of Ezekiel nor elsewhere in the Bible. How then, one might ask, can the Doctrine and Covenants attribute such a prophecy to Ezekiel seeing how this passage ("spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel") is found in all manuscripts and early publications of this revelation with only minor variations, none of which affect the wording?

One of the possibilities is that the text of the book of Ezekiel may have been modified, resulting in the loss of this prophecy from the Bible (see 1 Nephi 13:26). Several of the Church Fathers of the first centuries of the Christian era quoted items from Ezekiel that are not found in the biblical book of that name. Epiphanius (ca. A.D. 315-403) attributes to Ezekiel the story of the blind and lame men,<sup>lxvii</sup> which is also found, without attribution, in TB *Sanhedrin* 91a-b<sup>lxviii</sup> but which is unknown from the biblical Ezekiel.

Additionally, during the rabbinic council held in Yabneh (Yamnia) in A.D. 90 to determine which books would be accepted as authentic scripture, there were many disagreements over the canonicity of Ezekiel, whose description of the temple service in the last days (chapters 40-48) contradicted the rules laid down in the Torah. Of this, one of the rabbis said, "When Elijah comes, he will explain the difficulty" Others were not content to wait so long. Rabbi Hananiah literally burned the midnight oil for many nights *revising* the text of Ezekiel. The Talmud said of him: "Blessed be the memory of Hananiah, son of Hezekiah: if it had not been for him, the book of Ezekiel would have been 'hidden' (i.e., withdrawn from public reading), . . . What did he do? They brought him three hundred measures of oil, and he sat down and explained it."<sup>lxix</sup> By this, it was understood that the rabbi had modified the text to make it acceptable to the council.<sup>lxx</sup>

This story suggests the possibility that the passage relating to the latter-day destruction of "the great and abominable church" may have been omitted from the book of Ezekiel, either inadvertently or during a deliberate modification of the text.

Another possible explanation for the absence of the passage from the book of Ezekiel is that it was included in another of Ezekiel's books that is no longer extant. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century A.D., declared that Ezekiel had "left behind him in writing two books" containing prophecies about the calamities that would befall the Jews.<sup>lxxi</sup> Among the Dead Sea Scrolls are five fragmentary copies (4Q385, 4Q386, 4Q387, 4Q388, 4Q391) of a text that has been termed "Pseudo-Ezekiel" because it contains passages from the biblical Ezekiel that vary from what is found in the standard Masoretic Hebrew text and some material not found in Ezekiel at all. Strugnell and Dimant have referred to the text as "Second Ezekiel."<sup>lxxii</sup>

It is unlikely that Nephi had access to the writings of Ezekiel, for he lived in Babylon at the time that Lehi's family left Jerusalem. But the similarity between the prophecies suggests that Ezekiel, like John and Nephi, shared the same vision of the future destruction of the wicked.



[John A. Tvedtnes, "Ezekiel's "Missing Prophecy," in Voices of Old Testament Prophets: The 26th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, pp. 110-119]

Note\* Apparently Isaiah also saw the same vision or one similar to that of Nephi, for in expounding Isaiah's prophecies (1 Nephi 20-21--compare Isaiah 48-49), Nephi declares: "And the blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads . . . and that great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord, yea, that great and abominable church, shall tumble to the dust and great shall be the fall of it" (1 Nephi 22:13-14) Later, after quoting a large section of Isaiah's writings (2 Nephi 12-24--compare Isaiah 2-14), Nephi also declares: "But behold, that great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the earth, and great must be the fall thereof" (2 Nephi 28:18) [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

### 1 Nephi 13:12 I . . . Beheld a Man among the Gentiles:

According to Reynolds and Sjordahl, there is nothing in itself, improbable in the assumption that Columbus had the blood of Israel in his veins. On the contrary, his character and his mission were of such nature as to lend some color to that assumption. Nephi saw him "among" the Gentiles (1 Nephi 13:12), but that does not necessarily mean that he was a Gentile. I am inclined to the view that Nephi, when stating that he was "separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters" (1 Nephi 13:12), in reality says that they were brethren and that was the main element that separated them from each other. But, be that as it may, the following lines are of interest in this connection:

The story of the Jews in America begins with Christopher Columbus. On August 2, 1492, more than 300,000 Jews were expelled from Spain . . . and on August 3, the next day, Columbus set sail for the west, taking a group of Jews with him . . . Columbus himself tells us that he consorted much with Jews. The first letter he wrote detailing his discoveries was to a Jew. Indeed, the eventful voyage itself which added to men's knowledge and wealth "the other half of the earth," was made possible by Jews.

The pleasant story that it was Queen Isabella's jewels which financed the voyage has disappeared under cool research. There were three Maranos or "secret Jews" who wielded great influence at the Spanish Court: Luis de Santangel, who was an important merchant of Valencia and a "farmer" of the royal taxes; his relative Gabriel Sanchez, who was the royal treasurer; and their friend, the royal chamberlain, Juan Cabrero . . . Santangel craved permission to advance the money himself, which he did, 17,000 ducats in all, about \$20,000, perhaps equal to \$160,000 today.

Associated with Columbus in the voyage were at least five Jews: Luis de Torres, interpreter; Marco, the surgeon; Bernal, the physician; Alonzo de la Calle, and Gabriel Sanchez . . . Luis de Torres was the first man ashore . . . He settled in Cuba." (*The International Jew*, Dearborn, Michigan, 1920, p 33)

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 120]

**1 Nephi 13:12 A Man Among the Gentiles:**

Reynolds and Sjodahl write:

“During seven long years Columbus importuned King Ferdinand for a hearing. But he was generally regarded as a visionary. Even the children in the streets knew him as one mentally unsound. When, at last, the learned council condescended to make a report, it was to the effect that the plan was too foolish to merit attention. ‘It is absurd,” they said, “to believe that there are people on the other side of the world, walking with their heels upward, and their heads hanging down. And then, how can a ship get there? The torrid zone through which they must pass, is a region of fire, where the very waves boil. And even if a ship could perchance get around there safely, how could it ever get back? Can a ship sail uphill?’

“With such arguments the wise men of Spain were about to drive Columbus out of the country. In fact, he decided to go to France. But, fortunately, the queen, Isabella, had as much to say in such matters as her royal consort. And she listened to friends of Columbus. She was even willing to raise money on her jewels to defray the expenses of a voyage. But this was not required of her. Luis de Santangel, who held the keys to the treasury of Aragon, looked after the finances. The agreement between the regents and Columbus was signed on April 17, 1492. Columbus shed tears of joy. He had reached the goal, after eighteen long years of labor, disappointments and heartache.

“Columbus is described as a man of commanding presence, tall and powerful, fair, ruddy complexion, and blue-grey eyes. By the time he sailed for the new world, his hair had turned white. His bearing was courteous and his conversation was captivating. Notwithstanding all discouragement, he never lost faith in his divine calling and mission.

“It was on August 3, 1492, that Columbus with three vessels-the Santa Maria, the Pinta, and the Niña, with 90 souls on board-set out from Palos, Spain. It was on October 12, the same year that Columbus with a retinue of officers and men set foot on the beach of an island which he named San Salvador.”

Reynolds and Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 119]

**1 Nephi 13:12 The Spirit of God . . . Came Down and Wrought upon the Man:**

Reynolds and Sjodahl write:

“According to the vision of Nephi, it was the Spirit of God that prompted first Columbus and then the Gentiles to go forth upon the waters.

“That Columbus considered himself inspired is well authenticated history. The following from an enlightening article by Mark Petersen on, ‘American History and Nephi's Vision,’ published in the Deseret News, March 25, 1933, proves that he was very much conscious of his divine calling:

"Many biographies have been written concerning Columbus. We take one at random, and quote from 'Columbus, Don Quixote of the Seas,' by Jacob Wasserman, translated into English from the German by Eric Sutton and published in Boston:

“On page 18 of this book, Columbus is directly quoted as follows:

“From my first youth onward, I was a seaman, and have so continued until this day. Wherever ship has been I have been. I have spoken and treated with learned men, priests and laymen, Latin and Greeks, Jews and Moors, and with many men of other faiths. The Lord was well disposed to my desire, and he bestowed upon me courage and understanding; knowledge of seafaring he gave me in abundance; of astrology as much as was needed, and of geometry and astronomy likewise. Further, he gave me joy and cunning in drawing maps and thereon cities, mountains, rivers, islands and the harbors, each one in its place. I have seen and truly I have studied all books, cosmographies, histories, chronicles and philosophies, and other arts, for which our Lord with provident hand unlocked my mind, sent me upon the seas, and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my emprise called it foolish, mocked me, and laughed. But who can doubt but that the HOLY GHOST INSPIRED ME?’

“On page 46 of the same book, we read that in the year of his success, Columbus wrote upon one occasion to King Ferdinand: ‘I CAME TO YOUR MAJESTY AS THE EMISSARY OF THE HOLY GHOST.’”

(Reynolds and Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 121)

**1 Nephi 13:12 The Spirit of God . . . Wrought upon the Man and He Went Forth upon the Many Waters, Even unto the Seed of My Brethren:**

According to a book by Arnold Garr, Christopher Columbus left many statements in his journals and other personal writings in which he boldly declared that he believed the Lord directed him in his great undertaking. Referring to his first voyage to America, he once stated, "With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies (Columbus most often referred to the New World as the Indies). . . This was the fire that burned within me. . . Who can doubt that this fire was not merely

mine, but also of the Holy Spirit" (West and Kling, 105). (p. 3)

Sources on Columbus' life are replete with evidence that one of his major motivations to sail to the Indies was to spread Christianity. He once wrote the following to Amerigo Vespucci (the explorer for whom America is named): "I feel persuaded by the many and wonderful manifestations of Divine Providence in my especial favour, that I am the chosen instrument of God in bringing to pass a great event--no less than the conversion of millions who are now existing in the darkness of Paganism" (Lester 79) (p. 30).

Columbus was fond of quoting John 10:16: "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (Watts 93; West and Kling 229) (p. 31).

Beginning with the decision Christopher made concerning his point of departure, and continuing all the way through to his return voyage to Spain, we can find numerous junctures at which the Lord manifested his hand in Columbus' key decisions (p. 41).

It is amazing, said George E. Nunn, a prominent geographer, that Christopher "did not make a single false move in the entire voyage" (Nunn 43) (p. 39).

The route Columbus chose has stood the test of time: five hundred years of sailing have proven it the best possible course for sailing west from southern Europe to North America. Nunn suggested that Columbus' successful navigation was the result of "an application of reason to . . . knowledge" (Nunn 50). Columbus, however, gave credit to the Lord, even though he was a successful seaman and an accomplished navigator. (p. 41)

On the way to America, Columbus changed course only twice during the entire 33 days at sea. The first alteration was on 7 October. Until that time, Christopher had sailed due west for 28 days. Then he noted in his journal that a great multitude of birds passed over, going from north to southwest. Bartolome de Las Casas, the man who transcribed Columbus' journal, wrote that from this observation, the Admiral "decided to alter course and turn the prow to the WSW [west southwest]" (Fuson 71). Professor Morison claimed that if Columbus had not changed course, "the voyage would have taken a day longer" (Morison 1:283). That extra day would have been critical, since two days before the eventual sighting of land, the crew threatened mutiny. Every extra day at sea heightened their anxiety; the Admiral's time-saving change of course on 7 October, therefore, just may have saved the expedition (p. 43).

After sunset on 11 October, just a few hours before land was sighted. For no apparent reason, Columbus gave orders to change direction from west southwest back to the original course of due west (Dunn and Kelly 59). He gave no explanation for the change, but it was, nevertheless, an excellent choice. Had he continued on the west southwest course instead of steering due west, he would have missed the island of San Salvador, and would likely have

ended up on the deadly reefs along the coast of Long Island (in the Caribbean), perhaps never returning to Spain (Morison 1:295). Many historians have attributed these changes in course to luck or chance, but Las Casas said, "God gave this man the keys to the awesome seas, he and no other unlocked the darkness" (Las Casas 35) (p. 44).

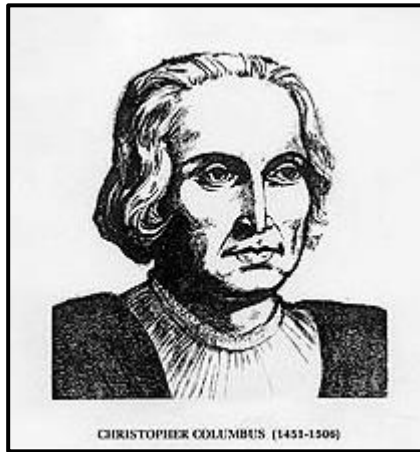
The route the Admiral chose for his homeward journey is yet another example of his being inspired of God. On 14 January 1493, he recorded in his log, "I have faith in Our Lord that He who brought me here will lead me back in His pity and mercy . . . no one else was supportive of me except God, because He knew my heart"(Fuson 174). Columbus did not return to Spain by the same southern sea passage that had carried him to America. Instead, he sailed northeast and caught winds coming out of the west that took him back across the Atlantic to the Azores. Once again, Nunn asserted that Columbus' navigational decisions were remarkable: "So much has been said about his discovery of America that it has been lost to sight and thought that he also discovered both of the great sailing routes in the North Atlantic" (Nunn 50). With no prior trans-Atlantic sailing experience, how did Christopher enjoy such good fortune on both legs of the trip? One noted historian declared, "there can be no doubt that the faith of Columbus was genuine and sincere, and that his frequent communion with forces unseen was a vital element in his achievement" (Morison 1:65).

Christopher Columbus died in Valladolid, Castile, on Wednesday, 20 May 1506. His last words were "in manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum" ('into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit')" (Taviani, *The Great Adventure*, 248) (p. 69). [Arnold K. Garr, *Christopher Columbus, A Latter-Day Saint Perspective*, pp. 3, 30-31, 39, 41, 43-44, 69]



[Christophercolumbusday.blogspot.com](http://Christophercolumbusday.blogspot.com)

1 Nephi 13:12 **He went forth upon the many waters, even to the seed of my brethren (Illustration):** Map of Columbus' First Voyage to the New World. [Arnold K. Garr, *Christopher Columbus, A Latter-Day Saint Perspective*, p. 40]



1 Nephi 13:12 **I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man (Illustration):** "Christopher Columbus (1451-1506)" [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1115]



[earthlyissues.com](http://earthlyissues.com)

1 Nephi 13:12 **[The Spirit of God] wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren (Illustration):** Landing of Columbus at the Island of Guanahani, West Indies, 12 October 1492. Artist: John Vanderlyn, 1847. *Courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol, National Graphics Center.* [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Ensign, October 1992, front cover]

1 Nephi 13:12 **Separated from the Seed of My Brethren by the Many Waters:**

According to Potter and Wellington, in the vision of Nephi (1 Nephi 11-14) it becomes evident that the land of promise would be across the "many waters" (1 Nephi 13:12). Until

Nephi had this great vision, we cannot be sure that anyone in Lehi's group really knew the magnitude of their journey ahead. It is hard to imagine what went through the minds of Nephi and Lehi when they realized the staggering scope of the project they needed to accomplish in order to get to the land of promise. They would need to build an ocean-going ship large enough to accommodate the entire extended family and all their provisions. They would be required to sail this ship an unbelievable distance, through myriads of different currents and tides, from silent calms to raging storms, through all sorts of varying conditions. How could Lehi and Nephi accomplish such a task? By going one step at a time and learning "line upon line." Lehi and Nephi would have known of only a few places where such ships were built and sailed far into the ocean, but the important point here is to realize that they DID know about these places. These could have included the Mediterranean ports of the Phoenicians, the ports of the Arabian Gulf and Mesopotamia, and those of southern Arabia. As a businessman, Lehi might have had contact with entrepreneurs from all these areas. The important lesson for Lehi and Nephi to learn was in which direction the Lord wanted them to go. The Lord would soon provide them with such divine assistance by way of the Liahona.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, p. 71] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 16:13]

Note\* In view of where Lehi DID go (the land bountiful on the shores of the Indian Ocean--Dhofar) it is most intriguing how the prophets spoke concerning two locations associated with the Indian Ocean--Ophir and Tarshish. For more information see the commentary on 2 Nephi 23:12 and 2 Nephi 12:16. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

#### 1 Nephi 13:13 **Other Gentiles . . . Went Forth Out of Captivity:**

According to Mark E. Petersen, when it is realized how despotic the European kings were at this period, it is easily understood that the colonists did indeed flee from captivity and oppression. Under such kings as James I of England, there was hardly a semblance of freedom. He was the supreme dictator in government, in economics, in education (what there was of it), and in the state of religion. He controlled the detailed lives of his people.

France, Spain, England, and Portugal were the principal powers involved in the discovery and exploration of America, and this is significant. All were ruled by despots, and when immigrants finally were allowed to leave the "mother countries," they indeed fled from captivity. The history of the Pilgrims and Puritans gives ample evidence of this fact. [Mark E. Petersen, The Great Prologue, pp. 32-33]

#### 1 Nephi 13:13 **Other Gentiles . . . Went Forth Out of Captivity:**

Note\* *I am a direct descendant of William Bradford, and I also have a grandson who bears the same name as the man who led the Pilgrims in Plymouth for over thirty years—**William***

*Bradford. As Thanksgiving was approaching, and as there had been much disturbing secular debate going on about the true nature of the Pilgrim Thanksgiving, I wanted to offer some insights to my grandchildren. But I realized that I didn't really know very much about the Pilgrims, so I decided to do some significant study. This commentary was the result of those efforts. The information I collected was from a number of websites on the Internet and a few selected source books. My intent was to tell the Thanksgiving story as I would see it. Hopefully some of the information that follows found its way to their Thanksgiving dinner table for discussion. Hopefully they will find it beneficial in years to come and add to what I have collected. [Alan Miner Personal Notes]*

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Cotton Mather was the son of Increase Mather, and the grandson of both John Cotton and Richard Mather --- all prominent Puritan ministers. Cotton Mather graduated from Harvard in 1678 at age 15.



Cotton Mather

After completing his post-graduate work, he joined his father as assistant pastor of Boston's original North Church and later assumed full responsibilities as pastor at the Church. Cotton Mather wrote more than 450 books and pamphlets, and his ubiquitous literary works made him one of the most influential religious leaders in America. The most important of these, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), comprises seven distinct books, many of which depict biographical and historical narratives. *Magnalia Christi Americana* is one of the more important documents in American history because it reflects a particular tradition of seeing and understanding the significance of the foundation that was first laid in New England.

As part of his 1702 seven-volume work, Cotton Mather wrote *The Ecclesiastical History of New-England*, in which he gave the history of that region from the year 1620 to 1698. In this work Mather uses historical and theological reasoning to argue that God watched over the Pilgrims, that it was God's will that the Pilgrims landed in New England.



Concerning the discovery of America, Cotton Mather records:

Three most memorable things which have born a very great Aspect upon Humane Affairs, did near the same time, namely at the Conclusion of the Fifteenth, and the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, arise unto the World: The First was the Resurrection of Literature; the Second was the opening of America; the Third was the Reformation of Religion.

Cotton Mather quotes the following on the settlement of America and especially that of the Pilgrims:

I shall but repeat the Words of the one Captain Weymouth, an Historian, as well as an Undertaker of those Adventures [namely the English settlement of America]; who Reports, "The one main End of all these Undertakings was to plant the Gospel in these dark Regions of America. How well the most of the English Plantations have answered this main End it mainly becomes them to consider. However, I am now to tell Mankind that as for One of these English Plantations [the Plymouth Colony] this was not only a main End, but the sole End upon which it was erected."

#### SEPARATION FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

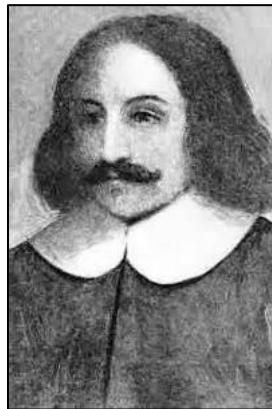
In the early 1600s, King James I of England ordered every citizen to join the Church of England or be persecuted and run out of the country. A Puritan faction refused to obey. These Puritans strongly believed that the Church of England and the Catholic Church had strayed beyond Christ's teachings, and had established religious rituals and church hierarchies that went against the teachings of the Bible. Feeling that the Church of England had not sufficiently completed the necessary work of the Protestant Reformation, the Puritans broke away and became known as the English Separatist Church. They stood up for their rights to worship as they pleased. They were subsequently sought by the King's guard. Some were arrested and imprisoned. Some were hanged. As a consequence the remaining Separatists fled into Holland in 1607, principally to Leiden (about half way between Amsterdam and Rotterdam) where they resided for twelve years. In Leiden, the Pilgrims' church grew as additional people fled from England. Their Church was created around the model of the "ancient church" described in the New Testament, so they had a Church Elder (William Brewster), some deacons, and a deaconess. Their pastor was John Robinson. They strictly honored the Sabbath by not performing any labor on Sunday. They studied the writings of earlier Protestants and Separatists, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, and they even established a printing press to illegally distribute new Separatist and Puritan books in England.

These Separatists had difficulty adjusting to the more permissive Dutch culture, and had difficulty supporting themselves financially. Because they wanted to preserve their religious ideas, their English language, and their heritage, they decided to leave Holland.

Sometime in 1617, John Carver, a 34-year-old deacon in Leiden was assigned as chief agent in London for the Leiden church. He began negotiations with officials of the Virginia Company in London for land in the Colony of Virginia under which they would be self-governing. At that time Jamestown had been settled in what was considered Southern Virginia, and Virginia's northern border extended up to what is now New York. These Separatists intended to settle near the mouth of the Hudson River. By late 1618 Carver had finally received a patent from the Virginia Company. And although King James would never put in writing that they would be free from his censure regarding their religious beliefs, they did receive a private indication that he would cause their congregation no problems.

### “SAINTS” – “PILGRIMES”

In a manuscript written by Puritan leader William Bradford, he called his fellow Separatists “Saints” and “Pilgrimes” because these faithful-to-the-Bible people had first left England for Holland, and now would leave Holland for America.



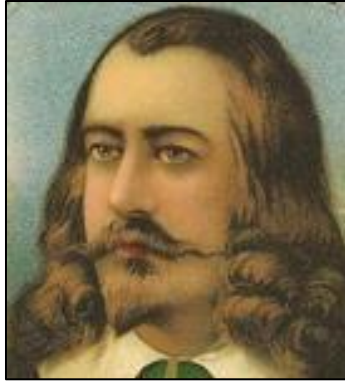
William Bradford

*[Note\* A biography of William Bradford's life is located at the end of this commentary on the Pilgrims.]*

These “Pilgrims” contracted with two ships—the *Speedwell* that would carry Pilgrims and others from Holland to Southampton, and the *Mayflower* that would sail from London to Southampton with some Pilgrims and others and meet the *Speedwell* there. Then both ships would proceed to America. The “others” that would accompany the Pilgrims on their trip to America were adventurers out for profit and were referred to as “Strangers” and “Gentiles” by William Bradford and the rest of the “Pilgrims.”

To fund the *Speedwell* and *Mayflower* voyage, the Leiden congregation turned to Thomas Weston and the Merchant Adventurers-- London businessmen interested in supporting the voyage in the name of profit. John Carver was very wealthy and provided much of his

personal fortune to the congregation in Leiden, and he invested in the joint-stock company as well as for the voyage itself.



John Carver

John Carver was given the task of organizing the voyage. By June 1620, John Carver was in Southampton purchasing supplies for the *Mayflower*. Funding for the voyage became so critical that the Pilgrims sold off supplies meant for the trip and also after their landing.

#### THE SPEEDWELL

The *Speedwell* was built in 1577, under the name *Swiftsure*, as part of English preparations for war against Spain. She participated in the fight against the Spanish Armada. After hostilities with Spain ended, she was decommissioned in 1605, and renamed the *Speedwell*.

The Leiden Separatists secured *the Speedwell* in Holland, and embarked from Delfshaven on July 22, 1620. Sixty-seven people sailed under the command of Captain John Thomas Chappell to Southampton, England to meet their sister ship, the *Mayflower*, which had been chartered by merchant investors.

## THE MAYFLOWER



A depiction of the Mayflower

*Note\* Master Christopher Jones and several business partners purchased the ship Mayflower about 1607. It's origins prior to that remain uncertain. Upon returning from a voyage to Bordeaux, France, in May 1620, the Mayflower and master Christopher Jones were hired to take the Pilgrims to Northern Virginia. This was the first recorded trans-Atlantic voyage for both ship and master, though Christopher Jones had several crewmembers, including a pilot and master's mates who had been to the New World before.*

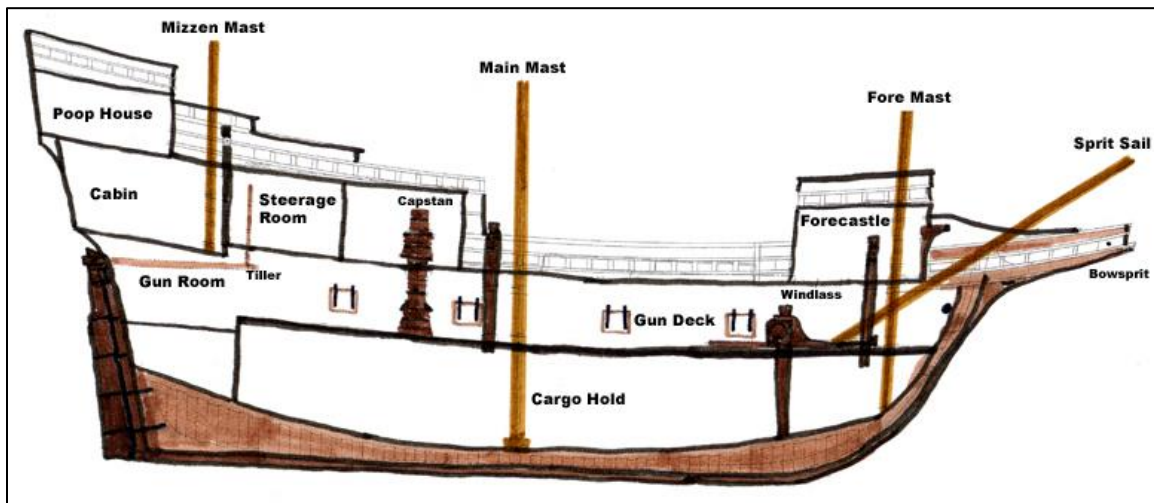


Diagram of the Mayflower

**Poop House:** The poop house was the living quarters for the ship's master, Christopher Jones, and some of the higher ranking crew, perhaps Master's Mates' John Clarke and Robert Coppin.

**Cabin:** This was the general sleeping quarters for the Mayflower's twenty or thirty crew members. The crew slept in shifts, so not everyone was sleeping in the room at the same time.

**Steerage Room:** This is where the ship's pilot (John Clark, primarily) steered the Mayflower. Steering was done by a stick called a whip-staff that was moved back and forth to move the tiller, which in turn moved the rudder.

**Capstan and Windlass:** These were large apparatus used to lift and lower heavy cargo between the ship's decks.

**Gun Room:** This is where the powder, shot, and other supplies were stored for the ship's guns and cannons.

**Gun Deck:** The gun deck is where the cannon were located. On merchant ships, this deck was also used to hold additional cargo. On the Mayflower, it is where the majority of the passengers lived. They built their own makeshift cabins within this area.

**Forecastle:** This is where the crew's meals were cooked, and where the crew's food and supplies were stored.

**Cargo Hold:** This is where the Pilgrims stored their cargo of food, drink, tools, and supplies.



Diagram of the Mayflower

The gun deck, sometimes referred to by the Pilgrims as the "tween deck" or the area "betwixt the decks", is where the Pilgrims lived for most of the voyage. Occasionally they ventured to the upper deck, especially during calmer weather when they would be less likely to get in the way of the seamen and there was less danger of being swept overboard. The gun deck had about four gun ports on either side of the ship for cannon. Even though the Mayflower was a merchant ship, it needed to be able to defend itself from pirates and ships from countries hostile to England. The ship also had to be prepared for possible "conscriptioin." This was where the King or Queen had authority to turn merchant ships into military vessels during a time of war. The height of the ceiling of the gun deck was only about five and a half feet, so tall people could not have stood up straight.

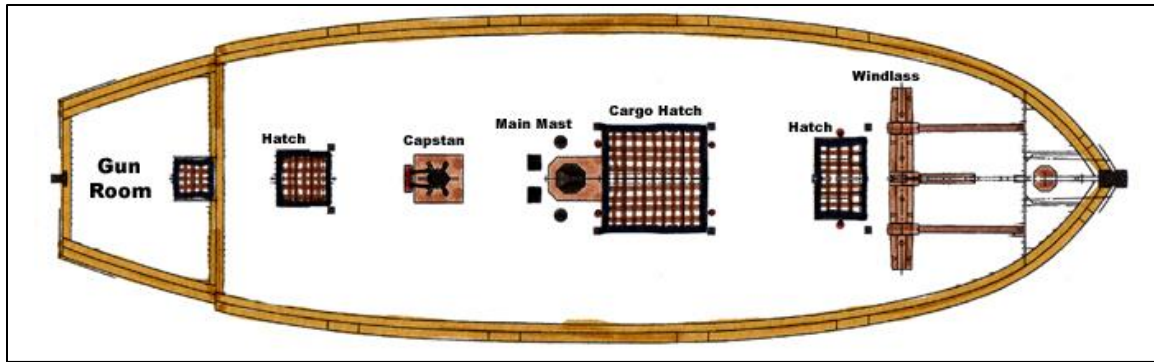


Diagram of the Mayflower Gun Deck (where the Pilgrims were housed)

During the voyage, the 102 Mayflower passengers lived primarily on the gun deck. The length of the deck from stem to stern was about 80 feet, of which about 12 feet at the back belonged to the gun room and was off-limits to the passengers. The width at the widest part was about 24 feet. This means the living space for all 102 people was only about 58 feet by 24 feet! Various hatches provided access to the cargo hold below. The windlass and capstan, used to haul heavy items between the decks, also took up floorspace, as did the main mast in the middle, and the sprit sail mast in the front. On top of that, the Pilgrims stored on this deck a 30-foot shallop (a small single-sail boat) that they would reassemble upon arrival and use for exploration and future trade. Families would have built themselves small little "cabins", simple wood dividers nailed together, to provide a very small amount of privacy. They lived in this small space for the 66-day voyage, and then many of them lived there another four months as they explored for a place to live, and later worked to build houses on shore in the middle of a snowy and wet New England winter.

## SUPPLIES

In addition to normal cargo and the crew, the *Mayflower* was loaded down with extra people and all their personal supplies. The following is a list of suggested provisions that the Pilgrims might actually have brought with them:

### Food and Drink

Biscuit, beer, salt, (dried) beef, salt pork, oats, peas, wheat, butter, sweet oil, mustard seed, ling or cod fish, "good cheese", vinegar, aqua-vitae, rice, bacon, cider.

### Clothing

Monmouth cap, falling bands, shirts, waistcoat, suit of canvas, suit of cloth, Irish stockings, 4 pairs of shoes, garters. Slippers, plain shoes, little shoes, French soles. Sewing needles.



A 17<sup>th</sup> Century Monmouth cap.

### Bedding

Canvas sheets, bolster "filled with good straw", rug and blankets

### Arms

Light armor (complete), fowling piece, snaphance, sword, belt, bandoleer, powder horn, 20 pounds of powder, 60 pounds of shot

### Household

Iron pot, kettle, frying pan, gridiron, two skillets, spit, platters, dishes, spoons of wood, napkins, towels, soap., hand mill, mortar and pestle



Iron cooking pot owned by the Pilgrims  
On display at the Pilgrim Hall Museum.

### Tools

Broad hoes, narrow hoes, broad axe, felling axe, steel handsaw, whipsaw, hammers, shovels, spades, augers, chisels, gimlets, hatchets, grinding stone, nails, locks for doors

## ANIMALS

The only animals known with certainty to have come on the Mayflower were two dogs, an English mastiff and an English spaniel because they are mentioned in the Pilgrims' journals. It is possible that the Pilgrims of the Mayflower brought goats, pigs, caged chickens, and other small animals such as cats, but it is a matter of conjecture and has not been confirmed. In 1623, Emmanuel Altham visited the Pilgrims in Plymouth and reported that there were six goats, fifty pigs, and many chickens, but many (or all of them) could have come on subsequent ships. The first cattle arrived at Plymouth on the ship Anne in 1623. The exact arrival of the first sheep in the colony is uncertain, but mention is made of them in 1628 Plymouth court record. The first horses and oxen did not begin arriving until the 1630s, most being brought to the Massachusetts Bay Colony to the north.

## THE CREW

The Mayflower would have been crewed by about thirty men. Among them were the following special positions:

Ship's Master: The ship's master (the term "captain" was only used for military ships at this time) was Christopher Jones. He was about 50 years old. He had purchased the Mayflower in about 1608.

Ship's Pilot and Master's Mate: John Clarke had been a ship's pilot on a voyage to Jamestown, Virginia in 1611. He was taken prisoner by the Spanish to Spain, but released to the English in 1616. He was hired to pilot the Mayflower's voyage.

Master's Mate,

Cooper (Barrel-maker),

Ship's Surgeon,

Master Gunner: (responsible for the maintenance and readiness of the ship's guns, powder, and canon),

Ship's Carpenter: (responsible for stopping leaks, caulking, splicing masts, and fixing anything ship-related that broke or needed mending),

*Note\* According to Cotton Mather, when the main beam of the ship cracked during the middle of the voyage, the Master Carpenter made the repairs with a giant screw that the passengers just happened to have with them. Mather cites this story as one of many examples that the Pilgrims were watched over by the hand of God.*



Boatswain: (responsible for the ship's rigging, rope, tackle, and sails, as well as the ship's anchors and the ship's longboat),

*Note\* William Bradford remembered that the Mayflower's boatswain was "a proud young man, who would often curse and scoff at the Pilgrim passengers." According to Mather, he taunted the Pilgrims saying that they would soon die and he would enjoy tossing their bodies overboard to be eaten by the sharks. But Bradford notes that, "when he [the boatswain] grew weak they [the Pilgrims] had compassion on him and helped him." Despite that help, the boatswain died the first winter.*

Quartermasters: (four quartermasters were in charge of maintaining the cargo hold and setting and maintaining the shift and watch hours. The quartermasters were also responsible for fishing and maintaining the lines, hooks and harpoons),

Ship's Cook (responsible for preparing the meals for the crew, and maintaining the food supplies and the ship's cook room --typically located in the forecastle of the ship).

*Note\* A number of the ship's crew would die the first winter in America and never return. Among them were the boatswain, three of the four quartermasters, the cook, and the master gunner. John Alden, the cooper, ultimately would decide to stay in Plymouth.*

## THE VOYAGE



The *Mayflower* was hired in London by John Carver, and sailed from London to Southampton in July 1620 to begin loading food and supplies for the voyage--much of which was purchased at Southampton. The Pilgrims were mostly still living in the city of Leiden, in the Netherlands. They secured a smaller ship called the *Speedwell* to take them from Delfthaven (now part of the Rotterdam metropolitan area), in the Netherlands to Southampton, England, to meet up with the *Mayflower*. The two ships planned to sail together to Northern Virginia. The *Speedwell* departed Delfshaven on July 22, and arrived at Southampton, where they found the *Mayflower* waiting for them. The *Speedwell* had been leaking on her voyage from the Netherlands to England, though, so they spent the next week patching her up.

On August 5, the two ships finally set sail for America. But the *Speedwell* began leaking again, so they pulled into the town of Dartmouth for repairs, arriving there about August 12. The *Speedwell* was patched up again, and the two ships again set sail for America about August 21. After the two ships had sailed about 300 miles out to sea, the *Speedwell* again began to leak. Frustrated with the enormous amount of time lost, and their inability to fix the *Speedwell* so that it could be sea-worthy, they returned to Plymouth, England, and made the decision to leave the *Speedwell* behind. The *Mayflower* would go to America alone.

*Note\* Passenger Robert Cushman wrote from Dartmouth, England in August 1620 that the leaking was caused by a loose board approximately two feet long. However, that board was apparently affected by an overly large mast. Prior to the voyage the Speedwell had been refitted in Leiden and had two new masts. It has been theorized that a refitted mast was too big for the ship, and that the added stress caused holes to form in the hull. William Bradford wrote that the "overmasting" strained the ship's hull, but attributes the main cause of her leaking to actions on the part of the crew.*

Some of the passengers and their cargo on the *Speedwell* were transferred over to the *Mayflower*; some of the *Speedwell* passengers were so tired and disappointed with all the problems that they quit and went home. Others crammed themselves onto the already very crowded *Mayflower*. Eleven families (47 people?) from the *Speedwell* boarded the *Mayflower*, leaving 20 people to return to London. The combined company of 102 continued the voyage.

Finally, on September 6 (Julian Calendar), the *Mayflower* departed from Plymouth, England, and headed for America. As noted previously, not every one of the 102 people who were part of the adventurers on board the *Mayflower* shared the Separatist ideas. These other people the Puritans referred to as "Strangers" or "Gentiles." In addition to these "Strangers" were the Crew. For the duration of the *Mayflower* voyage, John Carver seems to have been elected governor of the ship. Boarding the *Mayflower* with John Carver were his wife Katherine and five servants. By the time the Pilgrims left England for good, they had already been living onboard the ships for nearly a month and a half. The voyage itself across the Atlantic Ocean took 66 days, from their departure on September 6, until Cape Cod was sighted on November 9, 1620. The first half of the voyage went fairly smoothly, the only major problem was seasickness. But by October, they began encountering a number of Atlantic storms that made the voyage treacherous. Several times, the wind was so strong they had to just drift where the weather took them as it was not safe to use the ship's sails.



Drifting without sails in a storm

The Pilgrims intended to land in Northern Virginia, which at the time included the region as far north as the Hudson River in the modern State of New York. The Hudson River, in fact, was their originally intended destination. They had received good reports on this region while in the Netherlands. As the Mayflower approached land, the crew spotted Cape Cod just as the sun rose on November 9, 1620.



Cape Cod



The Pilgrim's landing location at Cape Cod in relation to New York and also the borders of Virginia

The Pilgrims decided to head south, to the mouth of the Hudson River in New York, where they intended to make their plantation. However, as the Mayflower headed south, it encountered some very rough seas, and nearly shipwrecked. The Pilgrims then decided, rather than risk

another attempt to go south, they would just stay and explore Cape Cod. They turned back north, rounded the tip, and anchored in what is now Provincetown Harbor. The Pilgrims would spend the next month and a half exploring Cape Cod, trying to decide where they would build their plantation. But their first duty was to kneel in prayer and give thanks to their God for bringing them safely to America.

*Note\* Most fortunately, according to Cotton Mather, the Mayflower was a converted cargo ship that had been used to carry wine. This wine had accidentally leaked or been spilled and had seeped into the wood of the ship over time. The alcoholic wine acted as a disinfectant and not one of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower died from sickness during the voyage (something almost unheard of). The Pilgrims huddled together below deck to keep from being thrown against the hull. They prayed, sang, read their Bibles and watched over one another without complaint as they endured an almost 66-day voyage.*

*Note\* In the journals of the English Latter-day Saints from 1840-1860 recounting their voyages across the Atlantic Ocean as part of their journey to Utah, we find that despite the order, cleanliness and care of the saints while on the ship, some died. This despite the fact that the captains of the various ships carrying Latter-day Saints often remarked how their trip with the Saints was the best overall voyage across the Atlantic that they had ever experienced.*

*Note\* According to Cotton Mather, the Pilgrims had originally intended to land at the Hudson River in New York, but they were forced to land first at Cape Cod. They would have probably reached the Hudson River but there were some people who had influenced the Mayflower's captain to take a more northerly route. Because of this route, they ran into shoals and breakers that almost sunk the ship--thus they were forced to land in what is now called Cape Cod, Massachusetts in New England. Had they landed on the Hudson River, the Indians at that time were so numerous and mighty in that area that the Pilgrims would have all been massacred, as some other settlers not long after were. Thus they were once again protected by the hand of the Lord.*

While at Cape Cod, John Carver became aware of dissention among those "Strangers" that made up a good share of the passengers on the ship, and so a contract was written by John Carver called the Mayflower Compact.

*Note\* THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT: It should be remembered that the Pilgrims ( the "Saints" or Separatists) traveled aboard the Mayflower with adventurers, tradesmen, and servants, most of whom were referred to by the Separatists as "Strangers." Some of these passengers proclaimed that since the settlement would not be made in the agreed upon Virginia territory, they "would use their own liberty; for none had power to command them...." To prevent this, many of the other colonists chose to establish a government.*

*The Mayflower Compact was an attempt to establish a temporary, legally-binding form of self-government until such time as the Company could get formal permission from the Council of New England. It was in essence a contract in which the settlers consented to follow the*



*compact's rules and regulations for the sake of order and survival. In essence it said the following:*

*In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, . . . solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. . . .*

*The "Mayflower Compact" was signed by most adult men on November 11, 1620 (Julian calendar) onboard the Mayflower shortly after she came to anchor off Provincetown Harbor near Cape Cod. John Carver most likely wrote the Mayflower Compact. He was its first signer and was the first governor of Plymouth Colony.*



Signing of the Mayflower Compact

The Pilgrims chose not settle there at Cape Cod.

In 1605, English sea captain George Weymouth traveled along Cape Cod, where he captured five Indians to take back with him to England. Frenchman Samuel de Champlain made a map of Plymouth Harbor in 1613. A river can be seen at the top at what would be Plymouth, and several villages and cornfields can be seen. A year later (1614), Captain John Smith traveled into Cape Cod, and made his own map of New England. When John Smith left, one of the sea captains remaining behind was Captain Thomas Hunt, who decided to take 24 Indians back to

Spain to sell as slaves. He lured them aboard his ship pretending to trade for beaver skins, and then captured them onboard. They were bound and sailed to Spain. Little wonder that in the years to follow the Indians in that area were "unfriendly" (to put it mildly) toward the white man.

When the Pilgrims arrived at Cape Cod it was late November. They sent out small groups to search for a suitable place to settle. In December a search party was attacked by a group of Indians. At night they had built a lean-to for protection from the cold. In the morning, after prayers, they were suddenly surrounded by Indians. "Arrows flew like hail about their ears," and pierced their coats and their hats, but miraculously none of the Pilgrims were wounded. The Pilgrims returned fire with their muskets and the Indians fled back to tell their leaders about the divine protection that the Pilgrims seemingly possessed.

Although the Pilgrims decided not to settle on Cape Cod, according to William Bradford the Lord had a reason for them landing there. While exploring Cape Cod, the Pilgrims discovered and "borrowed" large baskets full of Indian corn they had found buried in the ground on a hill they named Corn Hill. The Native Americans in the area buried their corn seed in large baskets to preserve it for the next year's planting season. The finding of this corn seed can be seen as a miracle for it provided some nourishment for the starving Pilgrims that winter, and it also provided seed for crops the following spring.

The Pilgrims continued to explore. They found an area on Plymouth Bay where "the woods were almost cleared of those pernicious creatures" (as they called the Indians). Regarding this "cleared" area, Cotton Mather cites another example of how the Lord was watching over the Pilgrims. He notes that not long before the Pilgrims arrived in that area a shipwrecked Frenchman had been captured by the Indians there. Just before he died in their hands, he warned them that because of their wickedness, God being angry would not only destroy them, but would also bring a group of men to settle that area that would not live in such a wicked manner as they did. The Indians boasted that God could not kill them, but almost immediately after the Frenchman's death a plague of sickness came to these Indians. Almost 19 of every 20 Indians died. When the Pilgrims arrived the land was covered with their unburied bodies. Thus the Pilgrims were not initially overwhelmed by the number of Indians.

The Pilgrims first observed the Lord's Day. The very next day they found the place where they would settle. On December 11, 1620, a search party landed on Plymouth Harbor beach, jumped into the icy waves and, fighting the sea and wind, secured their small boat to a large rock.

*Note\* PLYMOUTH ROCK*

*Plymouth Rock is the traditional site of disembarkation of William Bradford and the Mayflower Pilgrims who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620. It is an important symbol in American history.*



*The Landing of the Pilgrims, by Henry A. Bacon*

*However there are no contemporaneous references to the Pilgrims' landing on a rock at Plymouth, and it is not referred to in Edward Winslow's Mourt's Relation (1620–21) or in Bradford's journal Of Plymouth Plantation (1620–47), two important sources.*

*The first written reference to the rock's existence was recorded in 1715, when it is described in the town boundary records as "a great rock." [3] The first written reference to Pilgrims landing on a rock is found 121 years after they landed (1741). From "The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606-1623," edited by Edward Arber (London, Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1897), we find the following on page 429:*

*The real Plymouth Rock was a boulder about fifteen feet long and three feet wide which lay with its point to the east, thus forming a convenient pier for boats to land during certain hours of tide. This rock is authenticated as the pilgrims' landing place by the testimony of Elder Faunce who in 1741 at the age of ninety-five was carried in a chair to the rock, that he might pass down to posterity the testimony of pilgrims whom he had personally known on this important matter.*

*This rock had lain at the foot of Cole's Hill from generation to generation until the century after the Pilgrims' landing in 1620. When plans were afoot to build a wharf at the Pilgrims' landing site in 1741, a 94-year-old elder of the church named Thomas Faunce, then living 3 miles from the spot, declared that he knew the precise boulder on which the Mayflower pilgrims first stepped when disembarking. Faunce's father had arrived at the colony aboard the*



*Anne in 1623, more than 2 years after the Mayflower landing, and Faunce himself had been born in 1647, but Faunce insisted that not only his father but several of the original Mayflower passengers had, when he was a youth, identified the precise rock to him. Faunce was brought in a chair to the shore, in the presence of most of the town, and he reportedly began weeping at what he was sure would be his last sight of the rock, which he identified. Although Faunce identified the rock in 1741, it was not moved from the shore until 1774.*

*Some have doubted the accuracy of Faunce's identification in view of his age and the dates of the landing and his birth, but there is no doubt that he grew up in Plymouth at a time when many of the original passengers were still there.*

*Just preceding the time of the American Revolutionary War of 1776, the people of the colonies were looking for symbols of freedom to rally around. In Boston people were gathering the Liberty Tree to sing songs. The people of Plymouth decided to move Plymouth Rock to the Town Square. However, when the townspeople of Plymouth tried to move the rock in 1774 using chains pulled by 20 oxen, the chains broke and the rock was split into two parts. Undaunted, the townspeople took the top half to Town Square as a symbol of "separation" from England, with the bottom portion left behind at the wharf. The top half was placed next to a Liberty Pole and townspeople gathered around to sing songs about liberty and freedom—the rock symbolically represented the Pilgrims' (and the Colonists') quest for freedom.*

*The upper portion of the rock was later relocated from Plymouth's meetinghouse to Pilgrim Hall in 1834.*

*In 1835 Alexis De Tocqueville, a French author traveling throughout the United States, wrote,*

*"This Rock has become an object of veneration in the United States. . . . Here is a stone which the feet of a few outcasts pressed for an instant; and the stone becomes famous; it is treasured by a great nation; its very dust is shared as a relic."*

*In 1859, the Pilgrim Society began building a Victorian canopy at the wharf over the lower portion of the rock. Following the structure's completion in 1867, the top of the rock was moved from Pilgrim Hall back to its original wharf location in 1880, but it rolled off the cart cracking the rock. The top half was rejoined to the lower portion and the date "1620" was carved into the rock.*

*During the rock's many journeys throughout the town of Plymouth, numerous pieces were taken, bought and sold. Today approximately 1/3 of the top portion remains. It is estimated that the original Rock weighed 20,000 lb (9,100 kg). No pieces have been noticeably removed since 1880.*

*In 1920, the rock was lowered to its original site at water level.*



*What remains of Plymouth rock today*

*The care of the rock was turned over to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and a new portico was built for protection and viewing the tide-washed rock. Today there are pieces in Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts as well as in the Patent Building in the Smithsonian in Washington D.C.*

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The Pilgrims found a deserted village and springs with sweet water that ran into a creek close by. The Indians had called the village "Patuxet." The Pilgrims called their new village "Plymouth." ("New Plimoth" or "Plimouth"), named after the major port city in Devon, England from which she sailed.

The Pilgrims laid out plans and started building their first house on December 25th, the day we now celebrate the birth of Christ (although the Puritans didn't celebrate on this day).

*Note\* Plymouth became the second successful English settlement (after the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607) and later the oldest continuously inhabited English settlement in what was to become the United States of America.*

*Note\* Before I go any further with the story, let me once again clear up some confusion that arises when people tell the story of the "Pilgrims." Because the Mayflower landed in America in 1620 in harsh winter circumstances and with the threat of attack by native Indians, ALL the 102 people aboard the ship bonded together as a group to protect one another in a covenant contract that has come to be known as the Mayflower Compact. While there were just 40 true Puritan "pilgrims," the larger mixed group of 102 people have also been referred to as "pilgrims." In 1820 at a bicentennial celebration of the colony's founding, orator Daniel Webster referred to all of them as "Pilgrim Fathers." The term stuck. Thus some confusion has arisen as to who the "pilgrims" really were and what they believed. While all of the settlers might be referred to as "Pilgrims," I believe that the faith, the success, and the leadership of this mixed group can be attributed to the Puritan "Saints" as William Bradford originally called them.*

*Note\* Thus I guess it can be said that the portion of America that later became the United States was founded in part by latter-day "saints."*

The Pilgrims started constructing their living houses and storehouses in late December 1620, but only managed to get a couple built before and during the first winter. On 28 December 1620, the Pilgrims assigned out house-plots to the 19 family groups--each family was responsible for building their own house, as well as supplying labor to build community storehouses, a defensive fort, fences and sheds. They were assigned land plots that were 50 feet deep. The width of the lot was about 8 feet multiplied by the number of members in the family--so a family of six would have received a plot of land approximately 50 feet by 48 feet. But without the time, good weather, and enough manpower to quickly build a house, many of the Pilgrims continued to live onboard the *Mayflower* throughout the winter.



The reconstructed village of Plymouth showing how the houses were laid out and built

A year later (in December 1621), *Mayflower* passenger Edward Winslow wrote a letter in which he said "we have built seven dwelling-houses, and four for the use of the plantation." In 1622, the Pilgrims built a fence around the colony for their better defense--the perimeter was nearly half a mile, and the fence was about 8 to 9 feet high.

The winter of 1620/21 struck with such cruel intensity that the initial leader, John Carver, permitted the families to stay on the *Mayflower* while the common house was being built. The ship would not return to England until spring. Food supplies dwindled. The Pilgrim men killed a few fowl and dug clams and mussels, but in reality they knew little about hunting and fishing. They grew weak as they huddled on the *Mayflower* in blankets and layers and layers of clothes. The common house soon turned into a hospital. They sang and read the bible. The scouts had

found Indian corn stored in reed baskets and buried in the sand of Cape Cod. John Carver meted out five kernels of this corn to each person once a day.

Meanwhile the "Shamans" or spiritual leaders of the Indians gathered together to pray to their war gods to put a curse on the white men. The Shamans went through all their ceremonies and waited for the winter to take its toll. Disease followed hunger, and death followed disease. According to one writer, eight Pilgrims died in January, seventeen in February, and thirteen in March. When spring arrived, only fifty-seven of the settlers and half the crew had survived. Seventeen were children. Yet the Pilgrims never murmured, but kept their faith in God. Cotton Mather reports:

“Scarce fifty of them were left alive; and of those fifty, sometimes there were scarce five well at a time to look after the sick. Yet their profound submission to the Will of God, their Christian Readiness to help one another, accompanied with a joyful assurance of another and better World, carried them cheerfully through the sorrows of this mortality: Nor was there a murmur heard among them.”

During the winter, the Pilgrims were inspired to bury their dead in the middle of the night so that the Indians were not aware of the deaths. Such was their secrecy that by spring the Indians were convinced that these white men were protected by their God and that it would be better to make peace with them. And while it seems a tragedy that so many of the original Mayflower settlers died that first winter, it was a blessing in disguise, for had they all continued to live, the group would have been faced with a shortage of food such that most all of them would have died of starvation. God works in mysterious ways.

On March 17<sup>th</sup> the settlers planted. The women planted English herbs and vegetables in the gardens. The men planted peas, wheat and barley. They continued to build their houses.

In April the *Mayflower* set sail back to England. Not one of the settlers asked to return.

*Note\* The Mayflower returned to England from Plymouth Colony, arriving back on May 9, 1621. Christopher Jones took the ship out on a trading voyage to Rochelle, France, in October 1621, returning with a cargo of Bay salt. The following March he died. No further record of the Mayflower is found until May 1624, when it was appraised for the purposes of probate and was described as being in ruins. The ship was almost certainly sold off as scrap.*



"Mayflower's End" by Mike Haywood

In March, 1621 the settlers in Plymouth met some Indians that would become the salvation of the Pilgrims. An Indian by the name of Samoset visited Plymouth. To everyone's amazement he raised his hand in a sign of friendship and said, "Welcome, Englishmen."



Samoset greets the Pilgrims

Their meeting was warm but cautious. Samoset communicated that he did not speak the English language well, but would return with a friend named Squanto who did.

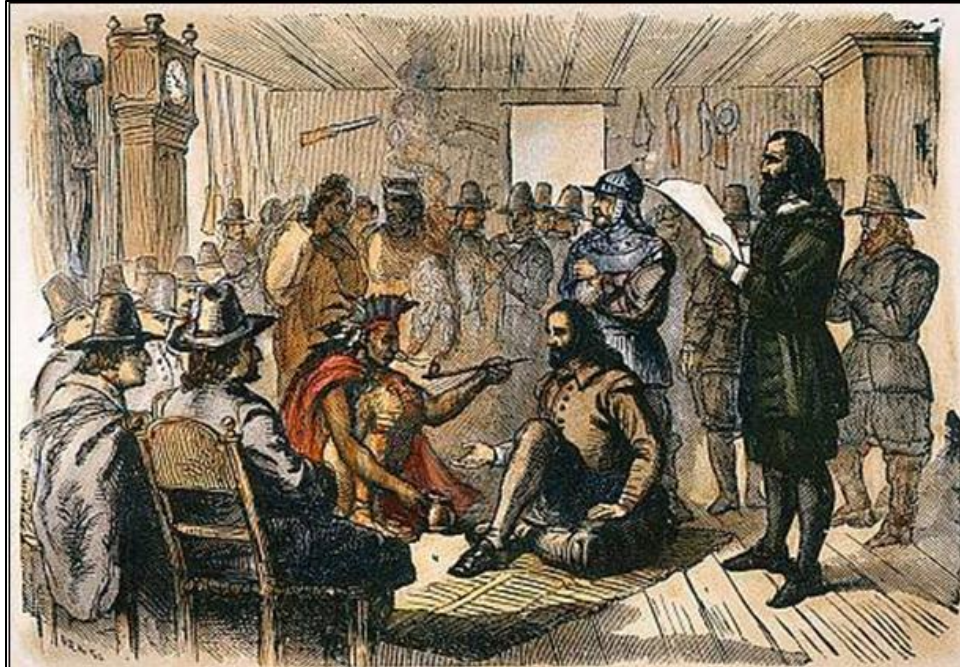
Samoset departed and returned a week later with the Indian chief called "Massasoit" and Samoset's friend named Squanto. Massasoit was the leader of the Wampanoag Indian nation when the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth in 1620.

On March 22, 1621, Massasoit decided to pay his first visit to the Plymouth Plantation at the invitation of Squanto and Samoset. Massasoit, with 60 armed men came and stood at the top of the hill overlooking the Plymouth Colony. Edward Winslow was sent to him with some knives and a copper jewel chain as gifts. Edward Winslow later described Massasoit as follows:

In his best years, an able body, grave of countenance, and spare of speech. In his attire little or nothing differing from the rest of his followers, only in a great chain of white bone beads about his neck, and at it behind his neck hangs a little bag of tobacco. . . . his face was painted with a sad red like murrey, and oiled both head and face, that he looked greasily. All his followers likewise, were in their faces, in part or in whole painted, some black, some red, some yellow, and some white, some with crosses, and other antic works; some had skins on them, and some naked, all strong, tall, all men of appearance . . . [he] had in his bosom hanging in a string, a great long knife.

On this occasion Massasoit was told that the Pilgrims only desired peace and trading. Massasoit was told that King James of England saluted him with love and peace, and accepted him as a friend and ally. Massasoit liked what he heard; the English would make powerful allies against his enemies in the region. The Pilgrims wanted a peace treaty, and so he willingly undertook the negotiations. Captain Myles Standish and Elder William Brewster took Massasoit to William Bradford's house for the negotiations with Governor John Carver. Massasoit was given some liquor, fresh meat, and some biscuits. For the next few days in a house still under construction, Squanto interpreted while Governor Carver and Massasoit worded a peace treaty that would last more than fifty years. Massasoit and the Pilgrims agreed to a treaty which said that none of Massasoit's men would harm the Pilgrims--and if they did, he would send them to the Pilgrims for punishment. And if anyone did unjust war against Massasoit, the Pilgrims would come to his aid. They also agreed that when trading, the Indians would not bring their bows and arrows, and the Pilgrims would not bring their guns.





The Pilgrims establish a peace treaty with Massasoit

After the agreement, Massasoit went back to his home in what is now Rhode Island, but Squanto stayed on at Plymouth. His story is another miracle to be told.

## SQUANTO

Tisquantum, also known as Squanto, was a Native American who assisted the Pilgrims after their first winter in the New World and was essential to their survival. He was a member of the Patuxet tribe, who belonged to the Wampanoag Nation.

Squanto's exact date of birth is unknown but it has been listed between 1585 and 1592. He was born somewhere in the vicinity of the village of Patuxet (present day Plymouth, Massachusetts). In 1605, Captain George Weymouth, who was exploring the New England coastline for Sir Ferdinando Gorges, owner of the Plymouth Company captured five members of Squanto's tribe, and took them along with Squanto/Tisquantum to England, where Gorges taught him English and trained him to be a guide and interpreter. Squanto returned to New England in 1614 with an expedition led by Captain John Smith. On his way back to Patuxet, Squanto was abducted by Englishman Thomas Hunt, one of Smith's lieutenants. Hunt was planning to sell fish, corn, and captured natives in Málaga, Spain. There, Hunt attempted to sell Squanto and a number of other Native Americans into slavery in Spain.

Some local friars discovered what Hunt was attempting and took the remaining Native Americans — Squanto included — in order to instruct them in the Catholic faith. Squanto

convinced the friars to let him try to return home. He managed to get to London, where he lived with John Slany, a shipbuilder for whom he worked for a few years. Slany apparently taught Squanto more English. He took Squanto to Cuper's Cove, Newfoundland in 1617. To get to New England, Squanto tried to take part in an expedition to that part of the North American east coast, but Thomas Dermer sent him back to London in 1618 to meet Sir Ferdinando Gorges and ask for permission about the trip to Squanto's homeland. At last in 1619 Squanto returned to his homeland with Dermer aboard John Smith's ship, having joined an exploratory expedition as a guide and interpreter along the New England coast.



Squanto served as a guide and interpreter on expeditions to New England

Squanto soon discovered that the Patuxet, as well as a majority of coastal New England tribes (mostly Wampanoag and Massachusett), had been exterminated the year before by a plague, possibly smallpox. Native Americans had no natural immunity to European infectious diseases.

On March 22, 1621, Samoset, who was visiting with Wampanoag Chief Massasoit, introduced Squanto to the Plymouth colonists near the site of his former village. Squanto acted as translator as a peace treaty was drawn up between Chief Massasoit and the Pilgrims that would last fifty years.

In 1621 Squanto was the guide and translator for settlers Stephen Hopkins and Edward Winslow as they traveled upland on a diplomatic mission to the Wampanoag chief Massasoit.

In a subsequent mission for Governor William Bradford that summer, Squanto was captured by other Native Indians. Myles Standish led a ten-man team of settlers from Plymouth to rescue Squanto. He was found alive and well. He was welcomed back by the Pilgrims at Plymouth, where he continued in his vital role as assistant to the colony.

In 1622 on his way back from a meeting to repair damaged relations between the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims, Squanto became sick with a fever. Squanto died a few days later. He was buried in an unmarked grave, possibly in Plymouth's cemetery Burial Hill.



Governor William Bradford, in Bradford's History of the English Settlement, wrote regarding Squanto's death:

Here [Manamoick Bay] Squanto fell ill of Indian fever, bleeding much at the nose, which the Indians take as a symptom of death, and within a few days he died. He begged the Governor to pray for him, that he might go to the Englishman's God in heaven, and bequeathed several of his things to his English friends, as remembrances. His death was a great loss.

To the Pilgrims, Squanto had been more than a miracle; he had been a series of miracles. Think of it—the Pilgrims happened to land at the precise location of Patuxet (by “accident”) within a short period of time when they could be met and taught by Squanto, who had been prepared by good men and religious leaders of Europe to return to his home in America—a man who had survived six crossings of the Atlantic Ocean--- a Native American who had survived the diseases of Europe for over fourteen years.

Because of his experiences, Squanto was able to see that the Pilgrims were good people. He was also able to see that they sorely needed to be taught how to survive in their new surroundings. He was able to help establish an agreement of peace between them and his Indian people. Afterwards the 30-year-old Squanto stayed with them and taught them many things. He taught them better ways to plant crops.



Squanto shows the Pilgrims how to plant corn using a fish as fertilizer

He showed them which wild berries were safe to eat. He taught them how to set traps to fish, to dig for clams, and to catch eel and lobster. He helped them to hunt. . The life of Squanto is a great example of “the hand of the Lord” guiding the affairs of men on earth.

## THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

That initial Thanksgiving, in 1621, was a three-day celebration of the first successful harvest, bringing together Pilgrims, Native Americans, and a bounty of food.



There are only two contemporary accounts of the 1621 Thanksgiving: First is Edward Winslow's account, which he wrote in a letter dated December 12, 1621. The complete letter was first published in 1622.

Our corn [i.e. wheat] did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom. Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.

The second description was written about twenty years after the fact by William Bradford in his *History Of Plymouth Plantation*. It is in this account that the Thanksgiving turkey tradition is founded.

They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercising in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.

## FOOD

The primary sources above only list a few items that were on the Thanksgiving "menu", namely five deer, a large number of turkeys and waterfowl, cod, and bass; plus the harvest, which consisted of wheat, corn, barley, and perhaps any peas that survived the scorching. To that list, we can probably add a few additional things that are known to have been native to the area and eaten by the Pilgrims: clams, mussels, lobster, eel, ground nuts, acorns, walnuts, chestnuts, squashes, and beans. Fruits and berries such as strawberries, raspberries, grapes, and gooseberries were available growing wild. Pilgrim house-gardens may have included a number of English vegetables and herbs, perhaps things like onions, leeks, sorrel, yarrow, lettuce, carrots, radishes, currants, liverwort, watercress, and others. It is unlikely much in the way of supplies brought on the Mayflower survived, such as Holland Cheese, olive oil, butter, salt pork, sugar, spices, lemons, beer, aqua-vitae, or bacon. It appears the Pilgrims may have had some chickens with them, so likely had access to a limited number of eggs. No mention of swine is found in any account of the first year. They did not yet have any goats or cattle: the first of those arrived on the ship Anne in 1623.

*Note\* Turkeys: The wild turkeys at that time were very much smaller than those we know today. Although it is probable that the wild turkey was part of their feast, the term "turkey" was also used by the pilgrims to mean any sort of wild fowl.*



*Wild turkey*

*Note\* Cranberries: Although cranberries are now a Thanksgiving dinner staple, they weren't part of the initial Thanksgiving. Cranberries were actually used by Native Americans to treat arrow wounds and to dye clothes. Cranberries are only one of three fruits native to America.*

*Note\* Corn: The Pilgrims were successfully able to plant corn and it became an extremely important crop for the settlers. However, they probably called it "**Indian corn**" or "turkey wheat." In the English of the period, the word corn meant rye, barley, oats, or other grains. A story has been told that the Indians introduced popcorn to the new settlers at that first Thanksgiving. Though a heart-warming tale it is not true. The variety of corn grown by the Native Americans would have been Northern Flint, which does not pop well but would have been dried to make a simple snack or ground up and mixed with strawberries for a cake-like dessert.*



*Indian Corn*

## Drinks

The Pilgrims may have originally been Puritans, but they weren't puritanical when it came to alcohol. Their primary beverage was beer, even for the kids because it didn't make them sick. We know today that beer's distillation process kills most parasites and bacteria, making the brew safer to sip. While in general the Pilgrims did not trust water which often made people sick during those times, the Pilgrims knew the difference between clean and dirty. And they knew enough about the springs of water at Plymouth to describe the water as "pure" and "sweet." So drinking water from the springs would have been the norm. How long they kept that water in containers by the house is uncertain.

## Thanksgiving Pies

Today, our Thanksgiving revolves around the giant bird, but during the time of the Pilgrims, wild turkeys weighed only around eight pounds (definitely not enough for company). Therefore, seafood and other meats were significant parts of the meal, as were a wide range of pies. Though Thanksgiving now ends on a sweet note with apple, sweet potato, or pumpkin pies, in Pilgrim times, both savory and sweet pies were baked for the meal as a way to preserve fruits

and meat. The pies were left outside in the cold and then brought in and reheated when guests came over.

*Note\* Pumpkin Pie: It is unlikely that the first feast included the pumpkin pie as we know it. The supply of flour had been long diminished, so there was no bread or pastries of any kind. However, they did eat boiled pumpkin and produced a type of fried bread from their corn produce. Besides, milk, cider, potatoes, and butter were also not available, as they did not have any domestic cattle for dairy products and the newly-discovered potato was still considered by many Europeans to be poisonous.*

### Cookbooks

Thanksgiving is a holiday for which old, traditional recipes make an appearance, and cookbooks are out in full force. The Pilgrims also used cookbooks, as evidenced by several "recipe books" from the period. These books provide insight into cooking at that time. The most famous may be Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife*, which was first published in 1615.

### Utensils

Today we take forks for granted, but the Pilgrims didn't use them. They used a knife, spoon, large napkin, and their fingers to eat their meals. They shared both plates and drinking vessels, which unfortunately contributed to the spread of disease.

### WOMEN WHO WERE THERE

As the *Mayflower* left England for America, there were 18 adult women on-board. Three of them were actually in their last trimester of a pregnancy. All the adult women on the *Mayflower* were married, there were no single women--although there were a few teenage girls nearing marriageable age.

While no women would die during the *Mayflower's* two-month voyage, life after arrival proved extremely difficult. In fact, 78% of the women would die the first winter, a far higher percentage than for men or children. The extremely high mortality rate among women is probably explainable by the fact that the men were out in the fresh air, felling trees, building structures and drinking fresh New England water; while the women were confined to the damp, filthy and crowded quarters offered by the *Mayflower*, where disease would have spread much more quickly. While the two-month voyage was long enough to be exposed to unsanitary conditions, the women remained living on the ship for an additional four months. Many of the sick were no doubt cared for on-board the ship by the women, increasing their exposure to colds and pneumonias.

Only five women survived the first winter. One of the five survivors, Mrs. Katherine Carver, wife of John Carver is said to have died of a "broken heart" in May just one month after

her husband John died. **By the time of the famous "Thanksgiving," there were only four women left to care for the Colony's fifty surviving men and children.**

#### GIRLS WHO WERE THERE

Eleven girls, ranging in ages from 1 through 17, made the voyage on the Mayflower with their families. No girls died during the Mayflower's voyage. After arrival in November 1620, the girls lived on the Mayflower during the winter while the men went out exploring for a place to settle and while the Colony was being constructed in January, February, and March. Only two girls died during that time. **Thus nine girls were present at the first Thanksgiving.** The girls would go on to marry, have children and live productive lives. Seventeen-year-old Priscilla Mullins would count among her descendants such people as President John Adams. Thirteen-year-old Elizabeth Tilley would count among her descendants such notables as Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, George W. Bush and Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith.

#### PARENTS AND CHILDREN AT THANKSGIVING

It's interesting to note that in a Pilgrim household, while the adults sat down to dinner, the children waited on them.

#### WHAT THEY WORE (CLOTHING)

The Pilgrims are often depicted in popular culture as wearing only black and white clothing, with large golden buckles on their shoes and hats and long white collars. This stereotypical Pilgrim, however, is NOT historically accurate. The Pilgrims, in fact, wore a wide variety of colors. This is known because when a person died, an inventory was made of their estate for the purpose of probate: and often the color of various clothing items were mentioned. For example, long-time church member, Mary Ring, died in Plymouth in 1633, and her estate included a "mingled-color" waistcoat, two violet waistcoats, three blue aprons, a red petticoat, a violet petticoat, blue stockings, and white stockings. In addition, she owned gray cloth, blue cloth and red cloth, ready to make additional clothing. Plymouth's Church Elder William Brewster, who died in 1644, owned green pants, a red cap, a violet coat, and a blue suit. And Governor William Bradford, when he died in 1657, owned a green gown, violet cloak, and a red waistcoat.

#### Women's clothing



A woman's undergarment was a long off-white short-sleeved, linen shirt called a shift. One or more ankle-length, waist-fastened petticoats were worn. The dress, or gown, consisted of two parts, a bodice and a skirt. The bodice buttoned all the way down the front. The skirt was ankle-length and gathered at the waist. A long-sleeve fitted waistcoat was often worn over the top, and an apron was worn if the woman was doing any kind of work. Women occasionally wore lace collar and cuffs, and a cloak. Women's hair was always worn pulled tightly back, and gathered under a coif or hat.

#### Men's clothing



For the upper body, men usually wore a long, short-sleeved, off-white linen shirt, with collar. On top of that he wore a doublet, which was relatively close-fitting, with long sleeves, broad padded shoulders, and buttoned down the front with tabs at waist. A cloak was sometimes draped over the shoulders. A lace collar and cuffs were worn, as was a felt or knit cap. Older or more revered men often wore over the top of everything a full-length wool gown. For the lower body, breeches or drawers were usually worn. These were front-buttoning, rather baggy pants which extended to the knee level. Stockings were knee-length, often made of wool; they were held up with tied ribbons referred to as garters. Shoes were either low cut leather shoes, or higher-cut leather boots.

#### Children's clothing

Until about the age of eight, children--both boys and girls--wore gowns. These gowns were similar to a woman's dress, with a full-length skirt, high neckline, and long sleeves, but were laced up and fastened in the back. Older boys simply wore smaller versions of men's clothing, and older girls wore smaller versions of women's clothing.

#### THANKSGIVING IS PATTERNED AFTER ONE OF THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

In the fall, when the harvest was great and bountiful, the Pilgrims decided to give thanks to God and their Native American friends for helping them through their first year in the New

World. The first Thanksgiving feast was patterned after the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert prior to entering the Promised Land. Agriculturally, Sukkot is also a harvest festival. The term “Jewish” more specifically refers to a descendant of Judah, who was one of the sons of Jacob. Because of his righteousness, Jacob’s name was changed by God to “Israel.” God chose the family of Jacob (or the “house of Israel”) to direct and teach all of God’s children on earth the principles of living in the same way that He lived. If they did so they would be blessed to live in a Promised Land. So the birthright of the members of the House of Israel involved blessings but it also involved responsibilities. The Kings of the house (or nation) of Israel were from the tribe of Judah, so historians began referring to all members of the House of Israel as “Ju---’s” or “Jews.” God had the House of Israel observe and teach certain righteous principles by celebrating holidays (“holy days”). The Jewish holiday of Sukkot celebrates the fall harvest, giving thanks unto God for the food that sustained their lives as they journeyed to the Promised Land. The Pilgrims celebrated their harvest Thanksgiving feast in their Promised Land of America after they had wandered as “pilgrims” for many years.

*Note\* We have been told by our prophets that the abundance of America has been reserved for the righteous descendants of the House of Israel, more especially of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were the sons of Joseph, upon whom was bestowed the birthright blessings of the House of Israel. These blessings also included the responsibility to watch over all of the other tribes of the House of Israel—to teach them the true Gospel and to gather them together as a “family” or “house.” Our patriarchal blessings tell us that we derive our birthright blessings from the tribe of Ephraim. Thus, one of our blessings AND responsibilities is to gather our family together (at least in spirit) in the fall to observe the holy day of Thanksgiving.*

#### THE PILGRIMS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GOD HAD WATCHED OVER THEM

The hand of God was upon the Pilgrims. As Gov. William Bradford put it, “Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things . . . and gives being to all things that are; and, as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation; let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise.”

*Note\* So in addition to the “Horn of Plenty” decorating our tables in symbolism of the harvest, it might be wise to also include candles as symbols unto the family, the nation and the world that we owe all our praise to Christ Jehovah.*

#### THANKSGIVING BECOMES A HOLIDAY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Since the days of the Pilgrims, festivals of Thanksgiving for autumn harvest were observed sporadically in local communities across the American colonies. Significantly, the month of October, 1777 saw the union of all 13 colonies in a thanksgiving celebration for the



very first time. George Washington proclaimed a National Day of Thanksgiving in 1789. John Adams and James Madison both urged Americans to observe a period of thanksgiving. But as new generations came into being, the thanksgiving tradition dwindled.

Considered the "Mother of Thanksgiving," Sara Hale (1788-1879) was an influential editor and writer who wrote editorials and letters to elected officials for forty years before eventually urging President Lincoln to proclaim a national day of thanksgiving. She selected the last Thursday in November because, as she said, harvests were done, elections were over, and summer travelers were home. **She also believed a national thanksgiving holiday would unite Americans in the midst of dramatic social and industrial change and "awaken in Americans' hearts the love of home and country, of thankfulness to God, and peace between brethren."**

*Note\* It is worthy of note that it took the Revolutionary War and the Civil War to bring the country to its knees in thankfulness to God for the blessings we enjoy.*

Since Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving holiday in 1863, Thanksgiving has been observed annually. Since Lincoln's original proclamation, only one president has failed to mark Thanksgiving Day on the fourth Thursday in November. As president, Franklin D. Roosevelt used his authority to reschedule Thanksgiving. In 1939, FDR caused a stir by declaring that Thanksgiving would occur on the third Thursday in November instead of the fourth. Why? Roosevelt thought moving the holiday up by one week would help Depression-era merchants by giving them more selling days before Christmas. In 1841, Congress fought back with a joint resolution officially establishing the fourth Thursday of November as the national holiday.

*Note\* Our Thanksgiving celebration serves as a constant reminder that our nation is a Biblical nation--- NOT an Atheist nation---NOT a Muslim nation---NOT a totally Secular nation with no special or particular spiritual direction---it IS a nation that should look to God the Father and his son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost for guidance. As a nation we should NEVER shrink from giving honor and thanks to the God that helped found this nation and preserve this nation. We should NEVER shrink from teaching the principles of this God to the children of this nation. Yet our history and tradition is being threatened---SEE the note at the end regarding our National Anthem and our World War II Memorial.*

## FREE ENTERPRISE

About a year after the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth, the ship *Fortune* arrived on November 9, 1621. The *Fortune* brought mostly young, undisciplined men, whom the company hoped would contribute labor, but problems arose because the young men did not work as hard as they were expected to. The Pilgrims were initially required to labor for the common good. In other words, no matter how hard an individual person worked, he still only received back the same as all the others. This led to laziness on the part of some members of the group. They

reasoned, "Why work?" when one who didn't work hard got the same share as those who worked hard. The leader of the Pilgrims, William Bradford was wise enough to change this policy so that if individuals worked hard to produce more, they were able to keep the excess of what they produced after the "poor" (due to injury, sickness or other misfortune) were taken care of.

#### THE PILGRIMS WERE MIRACULOUSLY PRESERVED BY THE HAND OF GOD

Cotton Mather notes that the year after the first landing at Plymouth, more Pilgrims arrived, but they had failed to furnish enough food and supplies. Then there came a drought that lasted from May to July. It had ruined part of the crop and threatened to destroy it all. Faced with famine and starvation the Pilgrims set aside a day of fasting and prayer. At the beginning of the day there was not a cloud in the sky, but by evening the clouds started to roll in. Rain came. The Indians were amazed. This convinced them of the power of the white man's god. The Indians were also amazed because while the rains had come heavy where they lived and beaten down the cornstalks in their village, the rain was much more controlled where the Pilgrims were and their cornstalks stood tall after the storm. The Pilgrims were so thankful for the rains that had preserved their crops and their lives that they set aside a day for a day of Thanksgiving.

#### THE PILGRIMS' PATENT RIGHTS WERE MIRACULOUSLY PRESERVED

According to Cotton Mather, as the Pilgrims had settled outside of Virginia where they had obtained a Patent, a new Patent was required. Mather writes that the Pilgrims in Plymouth employed a Man to obtain the Patent "in the name of these Planters for a convenient quantity of the Country where the Providence of God had now disposed them." But this man spoke "one word for them [and] two words for himself and surrepticiously procured the Patent in his own Name, reserving for himself and his heirs an huge Tract of the Land; and intending the *Plymotheans* to hold the rest as Tenants under him." He contracted for a ship and took on board many passengers, but the ship started leaking and "one strand of their Cable was accidentally cut, by which means it broke in a stress of wind, and they were in extream danger of being wrack'd upon the sands." After expending a good amount of money for repairs and adding to the number of passengers, they put out to sea again. "But after they had got half way, one of the baddest and longest storms that had been known since the Days of the Apostle Paul drove them home to England again with a vessel well nigh torn to pieces." Mather notes that while the lives of the passengers were mercilessly preserved, this Man grew "sick of his Patent" and signed it over to the Colony. The Patent was re-written and was soon after taken over to the Plymouth Colony by passengers in another vessel. Among these passengers were worthy and useful men who had come "to seek the welfare of this little Israel." While they were

“grieved to see the circumstances of their friends” at Plymouth, they “were glad that they were no worse.” Once again the Lord had watched over them.

#### THE MIRACULOUS HEALING OF MASSASOIT

In 1823 the great Indian Chief Massasoit was stricken with a sickness. All the Indian Shamans (Spiritual “Doctors”) couldn’t help him. The Lord inspired a faithful group of Pilgrims to risk their lives and go to the Indian village with some of their own “white man” remedies. These Pilgrims must have had great faith that the Lord would preserve them in such an endeavor. One can only imagine what would have happened had things gone badly. But Massasoit recovered and became convinced of the Pilgrims' peaceable intentions and the power of their god. He revealed to them a plot by another Indian tribe to attack the Pilgrims and they were saved from destruction. He sent word for miles around that the Pilgrims were a good and peaceful people. The details are as follows:

In March 1623, Massasoit became extremely ill, and when word came to Plymouth, Edward Winslow made a trip to visit him. When they got part of the way there they were informed that Massasoit had already died. They remained where they were and sent a messenger to verify what they had heard. The messenger returned saying Massasoit was not dead yet, so they continued on. They found Massasoit in his house, full of many visitors. Massasoit was now blind, but could still understand--when they told him the English had come to visit him, he asked "Keen Winslow?" which means "Are you Winslow?" Then he said, "Matta neen wonckanet namen, Winslow!", which means "O Winslow, I shall never see you again." Winslow gave him a little bit of medicine, and scraped out the inside of his mouth which had swollen up preventing him from eating or drinking anything. Then he gave Massasoit some water and more medicine. In about half an hour, Massasoit had regained his eye sight and was getting better. Winslow made a chicken broth soup for Massasoit, and within a couple days Massasoit had his appetite back, and eventually recovered. Massasoit then revealed to the Pilgrims a conspiracy plot by the Massachusetts Indians to attack them. The Pilgrims led by Myles Standish, with the help of some of Massasoit's men, defeated the plot before it could materialize.

Massasoit lived a long life, and remained a close friend and ally of the Plymouth Colony until his death around 1661.

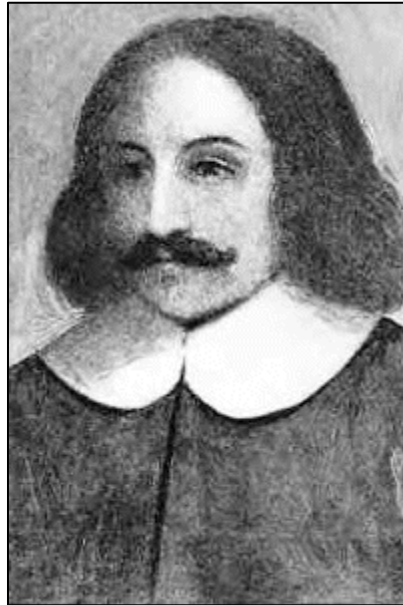
#### AMERICA IS THOUGHT OF AS A “NEW JERUSALEM”

About eight years later, a group of Pilgrims made a settlement about 50 miles north of Plymouth. They named their settlement "Salem," a shortened word for Jerusalem. This was done as evidence that the Pilgrims believed that America was the land of the New Jerusalem.

The word "Salem" also means peace. It is not surprising that the New England area provided the early spiritual leadership and direction for this new land that would become the United States of America

*Note\* The Book of Mormon also tells us that America is the land of the New Jerusalem.*

## WILLIAM BRADFORD



William Bradford

William Bradford was born about 1590. He was an English Separatist leader in Leiden, Holland and sailed to America on the Mayflower. He was a signatory to the Mayflower Compact. In April, 1821 after the death of Governor John Carver, William Bradford was elected to serve as Governor of the Plymouth colony. He would retain this position the rest of his life. He served as Plymouth Colony Governor five times covering about thirty years between 1621 and 1657. He died in 1657.

William Bradford was born in Austerfield, Yorkshire, England. His parents owned a large farm and were considered wealthy and influential. He was likely of noble ancestry.



The Manor House, Austerfield, South Yorkshire, England—birthplace of William Bradford

William's childhood was marked by numerous deaths in the family. He was just over a year old when his father died. When he was four years old, his mother remarried and Bradford was sent to live with his grandfather. Two years later, his grandfather died and he returned to live with his mother and stepfather. A year later, in 1597, his mother died. William Bradford thus became an orphan at age 7 and was sent to live with two uncles.

His uncles wanted young Bradford to help on the farm and later but William suffered at that time from a "long sickness" and was unable to work. He instead turned to reading. He became familiar with the Bible and classic works of literature.

When Bradford was 12 years old, a young friend invited him to the All Saints Church.

During one meeting Bradford befriended William Brewster. During frequent visits, Bradford borrowed books from Brewster, and Brewster regaled the young man with stories of the efforts about church reform taking place across England. They both became Separatists that believed in a reformation of the Church of England. Because of this they were persecuted. William was put in prison for a time. The Separatists (and William) finally left for Amsterdam, Holland.

William Bradford arrived in Amsterdam in August 1608. Having no family with him, William was taken in by the Brewster household. The Separatists, being foreigners and having spent most of their money in attempts to get to Holland, had to work the lowest of jobs and live in poor conditions. After nine months, the congregation chose to relocate to the smaller city of Leiden. When the chance arose to leave Holland for America in 1620, William was part of the group he called "pilgrims."

It was an emotional departure. Many families were split as some Separatists stayed behind in the Netherlands, planning to make the voyage to the New World after the colony had been established. William and Dorothy Bradford left their three-year-old son John with Dorothy's parents in Amsterdam, possibly because he was too frail to make the voyage.

After arriving at Cape Cod and Plymouth in November, 1620, William Bradford went with an exploring party for a few days. When he returned he found that his wife Dorothy had fallen off the Mayflower and drowned.

On January 11, 1621, as William was helping to build houses, he was suddenly struck with great pain in his hipbone and collapsed. Bradford was taken to the "common house" (the only finished house built then) and it was feared he would not last the night. During this epidemic of sickness there were only a small number of men who remained healthy and bore the responsibility of caring for the sick. One of these was Captain Myles Standish, a soldier who had been hired by the settlers to coordinate the defense of the colony. Standish cared for

Bradford during his illness and this was the beginning of a bond of friendship between the two men. After John Carver's in April, William was elected governor and, in that capacity, he would work closely with Miles Standish. William would come to rely on and trust Captain Myles Standish's advice on military matters. William Bradford would serve as governor for the rest of his life.

William married Alice (Carpenter) Southworth, age 32, in Plymouth on August 14, 1623. She had arrived on the ship Anne some weeks earlier. Alice was the widow of Edward Southworth. Alice brought two sons to her marriage – Constant, age 11, and Thomas, age 6. Alice and William had three children. She died in Plymouth on March 26, 1670 and was buried on Burial Hill in Plymouth near her husband's stone.

William Bradford's most well-known work by far is *Of Plymouth Plantation*. It was a detailed history in manuscript form about the founding of the Plymouth colony and the lives of the colonists from 1621 to 1646. Moses Coit Tyler called him "the father of American history." Many American authors have cited his work in their writings; for example, Cotton Mather referenced it in *Magnalia Christi Americana*.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES

*Note\** It is interesting to ponder just how far some people's view of America has strayed from Cotton Mather's thoughts regarding the Pilgrim settlement of America. They tend to focus on the negatives and ignore the positives—especially the idea that God had a hand in the whole affair. But how does one speak of the holy day (or holiday) of Thanksgiving or the actions of the Pilgrims if one doesn't believe in God and eternity?

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*Note\** Cotton Mather writes that although Columbus is credited with the discovery of America there was a man by the name of Sanchez, a native of Helva in Spain, who discovered it before Columbus. Sanchez used to trade in a small vessel to the Canaries, but was driven by a furious tempest over unto these western countries. On his return he gave to Colon, or Columbus, an account of what he had seen, but soon after Sanchez died of a disease he had got on his voyage.

Mather also entertains the idea that the Phoenicians of the Old World reached the shores of America a long time before Columbus.

*Note\** The Book of Mormon tells us that the people of Zarahemla came from Jerusalem and "were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters" (Omni 1:14-16) to America where they established themselves on a river that they named the "Sidon." Sidon was the capital of the Phoenicians at that time and Phoenician ships ruled the Mediterranean Sea and beyond from about 1300 BC to about 200 BC.

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*Note\* Cotton Mather writes that while Columbus landed on islands off the mainland in 1492, he didn't immediately settle the mainland. (It wasn't until 1519 that Cortez invaded the mainland.) Cotton Mather notes that Englishmen explored the mainland in 1497. Thus the Crown of England had an arguable right to the foundation of America.*  
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*[Note\* The above information has been researched, carefully selected, and edited from a large number of websites, articles and books on the Pilgrims. The best overall website that I found on the Pilgrims is Caleb Johnson's [MayflowerHistory.com](http://MayflowerHistory.com). There are two historical sources that I have found best reflect the history: Cotton Mather, [The Ecclesiastical History of New-England](#), and William Bradford, [Of Plymouth Plantation](#). Alan Miner , "Some Interesting Information About the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving" Compiled with notes, Nov. 23, 2014]*

**1 Nephi 13:13-19 Other Gentiles . . . Went Forth Out of Captivity . . . I Beheld That the Power of God Was with Them . . . They Were Delivered By the Power of God Out of the Hands of All Other Nations:**

In 2010 Chris Stewart and Ted Stewart published their book, *Seven Miracles That Saved America* (see [ShadowMountain.com](http://ShadowMountain.com)), in which they detail in 300 pages various examples of how God has protected and watched over the initial discovery, the settlement, the establishment of government, and the continued good works of the United States of America. The stories they narrate are as follows:

1. The miracles associated with Christopher Columbus's discovery of America.
2. The miracles which intervened to save the English settlement of Jamestown after other English settlements had failed. Also the miracles that prevented Jamestown from being overtaken by the Spanish and the Catholic Church , thus leading to freedom of religion and a refuge for many throughout the world that lived in religious, social and economic "captivity."
3. The miracles associated with Washington's troops and the weather conditions in the key battles of the Revolutionary War.
4. The miracles involved in the creation and composition of the Constitution of the United States—that it came about in a seemingly very small window of opportunity in time, and that so many great men worked together on its composition in a constructive manner.

5. The miracles resulting from the faith and prayers of Abraham Lincoln that seemed to guide us through the Civil War and lead the United States to a new level of freedom and strength. The question of “What if there was no Abraham Lincoln” is explored.
6. The seemingly God-directed actions that altered the critical naval battle of Midway in World War II. The scenario if the United States would have lost that battle is played out.
7. The miraculous survival of President Ronald Regan from an assassination attempt is examined. The authors explore the alternative scenario.

The authors then treat the question of “Why America Matters.” They write: “What is it about this nation that would justify His [the Lord’s] intervention in the ways that have been presented in this book? Could it be that America represents something important to God?” They explore the link between the freedom and liberty and the principles associated with the foundation of the United States: (a) the rule of law (b) justice for all; and (c) an adherence to public and private morality. They quote Clare Booth Luce who said: “All history bears witness to the fact that there can be no public virtue without private morality. There cannot be good government except in a good society. . . . The character of a democratic government will never be better than the character of the people it governs.” They then provide some answers for the question of why we should believe in and hope for America. They end with the following: “As the early patriot John Page once wrote to Thomas Jefferson, ‘Do you not think an Angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this Storm?’ (n13) Indeed, we do not walk alone.”

[Alan Miner, Personal Notes on the book by **Chris Stewart and Ted Stewart**, [Seven Miracles That Saved America: Why They Matter and Why We Should Have Hope](#) ]

**1 Nephi 13:13-19 (The Pilgrims, the Revolutionary War, and the Founding Fathers Lay the Foundation for the Restoration):**

An article by Arnold K. Garr in the June 1999 Ensign, entitled “Preparing for the Restoration,” he discusses these historical developments as preludes to the restoration of the gospel:

“On the occasion of the Church’s centennial in 1930, the First presidency declared: ‘It was not by chance that the Puritans left their native land and sailed away to the shores of New England, and that others followed later. They were the advance guard of the army of the Lord, [foreordained] to establish the God-given system of government under which we live....and prepare the way for the restoration of the Gospel of Christ.’



“President Ezra Taft Benson taught that ‘all of the great events that have transpired [in America], including the coming of Columbus and of the Pilgrim fathers, were foreseen by ancient prophets.’ After prophesying about Columbus, Nephi continued: ‘I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters’ (1 Ne 13:13). Writers such as Plymouth Plantation governor William Bradford (1590-1657) described the persecution and imprisonment the Pilgrims endured in Europe before they fled to America in search of religious liberty.

“Nephi foresaw that the colonists would ‘humble themselves before the Lord’ (1 Ne 13:16). William Bradford recorded that as the Pilgrims set sail on their voyage to America, ‘they had a day of solemn humiliation,’ their pastor proclaiming ‘a fast, that we might humble ourselves before our God.’ Acting under inspiration, the Pilgrims drew up the Mayflower Compact, said to be ‘the first written constitution in North America,’ which called for obedience to laws enacted by the group rather than decreed by a monarch.

“The Puritans subsequently settled in Massachusetts Bay and eventually absorbed the Pilgrims. However, the Puritans were not tolerant of those who did not believe as they did. One of the dissenters among the Puritans was Roger Williams, who believed in religious freedom and maintained that the apostolic church organized by Christ was no longer on the earth. After banishment, Williams and his followers founded Providence, Rhode Island, and adopted principles that became important traditions in the United States, such as democracy, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

“Colonists in other parts of America also worked for religious freedom. Under the leadership of the Calvert family, Roman Catholics settled in Maryland and in 1649 passed the Act of Toleration, which advocated freedom of conscience. In 1681 the king of England granted a charter of land to devout Quaker William Penn, whose colony in Pennsylvania became a model of religious tolerance. Of these colonists President Benson wrote, ‘The Pilgrims of Plymouth, the Calverts of Maryland, Roger Williams, William Penn—all had deep religious convictions that played a principal part in their coming to the New World. They too, I believe, came here under the inspiration of heaven.’

“The final event that Nephi observed in his vision of the American colonies was the War for Independence. He wrote:

“‘And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to do battle against them.

“And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.

“And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations’ (1 Ne 13:17-19).

“President Wilford Woodruff taught: ‘Those men who laid the foundation of this American government and signed the Declaration of Independence were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth....General Washington and all the men that labored for the purpose were inspired of the Lord.’ President Woodruff also related: ‘Every one of those men that signed the Declaration of Independence, with General Washington, called upon me, as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Temple at St. George, two consecutive nights and demanded at my hands that I should go forth and attend to the ordinances of the House of God for them.’

“George Washington gave credit to God for the victory of the United States. In his farewell address to his army, he said: ‘The disadvantageous circumstances on our part, under which the war was undertaken, can never be forgotten. The singular interpositions of Providence in our feeble condition were such, as could scarcely escape the attention of the most unobserving; while the unparalleled perseverance of the Armies of the [United] States, through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight long years, was little short of a standing miracle.’ President Spencer W. Kimball said: ‘The Lord permitted these few poorly armed and ill-clad men at Valley Forge and elsewhere to defeat a great army,...a few against the many, but the few had on their side the Lord God of heaven, that gave them victory. And there came political liberty and religious liberty with it, all in preparation for the day when a young boy would come forth and would seek and make contact with the Lord and open the doors of heaven again.’

“After the colonists won their independence, they experimented for a short time with a government under the Articles of Confederation. When they found that method inadequate, leaders turned their attention to drafting a new form of government. Few, if any, people on earth hold the resulting United States Constitution in higher esteem than do Latter-day Saints. The Lord has said: ‘That every man may act in doctrine and principle...according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment...

“And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood’ (DC 101:78,80).

“The Constitution and Bill of Rights applied directly to the needs of a new religion because they provided for freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly. Later the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that ‘the Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner.’”

[Arnold K. Garr, “Preparing for the Restoration,” June 1999 Ensign, pp 38-40)

### 1 Nephi 13:13 **Other Gentiles . . . Went Forth out of Captivity:**

In 1 Nephi 13:13 we have reference that Nephi "beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters." According to Mark E. Petersen, the history of the Pilgrims and Puritans gives ample evidence of the type of captivity they left to come to a land of freedom and liberty. However, we quote herein a story published in the 1933 manual for deacons quorums of the Church to illustrate that the captivity was literal--even a captivity behind jail doors. The story follows:

If one were to search among all **the Prophet Joseph Smith's progenitors** for one who best typified his righteous zeal for true freedom and his dauntless devotion to truth, perhaps no finer exemplification could be found than his fifth great-grandfather, the Rev. John Lathrop.



Rev. John Lathrop [ourfoundingtruth.blogspot.com](http://ourfoundingtruth.blogspot.com)

He was a young minister of the Church of England, happily married, with a family of beautiful children. He labored faithfully until in his conscience he felt he could no longer approve the things he must teach. He resigned his position, left the church, and in 1623 became pastor of the First Independent Church of London.

Persecution raged against him and his little band of devoted followers. They were forced to meet secretly, to escape the anger of the opposing bishop. One day, as they met in worship they were discovered by agents of the bishop, who suddenly invaded their meeting place, seized forty-two of their number, and sent them in fetters to the old Clink Prison, in Newgate. Finally all but Mr. Lathrop were released on bail, but he was deemed too dangerous to be set at liberty.

During these months of his imprisonment a fatal sickness had seized upon his wife, and she was about to die. Upon his urgent entreaty, the bishop consented for him to visit his dying wife if he would promise to return. He reached home in time, gave her his blessing, and she passed away. True to his promise, he returned to prison. His poor, orphaned children wandered about in helpless misery until someone suggested that they appeal to the bishop at Lambeth. One can picture the mournful procession as they came before him and made known their sorrowful plight.

"Please, sir," they cried piteously, "release our father or we too shall die." The bishop's heart was softened and touched with pity, and he granted to John Lathrop his freedom if he would promise to leave the country and never return.

Gathering around him his children and 32 of his congregation, he sailed to America, settling in New England, where he was warmly welcomed and soon became one of the leaders among the Puritans of his day.

[Mark E. Petersen, "American History and Nephi's Vision," published in the *Deseret News*, March 25, 1933. Quoted by George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, pp. 121-122]

#### 1 Nephi 13:14 **The Seed of My Brethren . . . Were Scattered Before the Gentiles:**

The 1981 Book of Mormon Student Manual reads:

"The fulfillment of Nephi's prophecy concerning the scattering of the seed of his brethren is so vast a topic as to fill volumes and can be touched on here only briefly. It is one of the most tragic stories of history, equaling in many ways the persecution and suffering of the Jewish people through the centuries. (See 1 Ne 19:13-15)

"From the time Columbus landed in the West Indies, the destruction and driving of the Indian people began. The extent of this destruction has only recently started coming to full light. For example, Wilbur R. Jacobs a noted historian, refutes the earlier projections made by European and American scholars of the Indian population at the time Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere in 1492. Estimates used to place the Indian population of North America at about a million, and in both North and South America at no more than 8 million. However, according to Jacobs, modern projections which are widely accepted today place the total at 90 million for the whole of the Western Hemisphere and nearly 10 million in North America alone. (See "The Indian and the Frontier in American History—A Need for Revision," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Jan. 1973, p. 45.) When this total of 10 million Indians living in North America is compared with the estimated 235,000 who were alive at the turn of the twentieth century, one begins to glimpse the scope of the tragedy...

." ...That story was repeated numerous times at the hands of men like Cortez, Pizarro, and DeSoto, in Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States. The scenes viewed by

Nephi six hundred years before Christ were fulfilled with horrible reality. As one author put it:

“Here was a race in process of being engulfed in an irresistible flood of peoples of an utterly different culture. Dislocated from their accustomed seats, transplanted again and again, treated by whites as hostile encumbrances of the fertile earth to be brushed aside or destroyed, bewildered by a type of economy for which they were unprepared, decimated by disease and vices to which they had built up no resistance, repeatedly seeing solemn treaties violated, subject to shifting governmental policies, preyed upon by incompetent and greedy officials, and at times demoralized by an excess of well intentioned but ill directed paternalistic kindness, it is a wonder that the Indians survived.’ (Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of the Expansion of Christianity, The Great Century, vol. 4, p. 323)”

[Book of Mormon Student Manual, 1981, pp. 34-35]

**1 Nephi 13:14 [The Seed of My Brethren] Were Scattered before the Gentiles and Were Smitten:**

The fulfillment of Nephi's prophecy concerning the scattering of the seed of his brethren is so vast a topic as to fill volumes and can be touched on here only briefly. It is one of the most tragic stories of history, equaling in many ways the persecution and suffering of the Jewish people through the centuries.

From the time Columbus landed in the West Indies, the destruction and driving of the Indian people began. The extent of this destruction has only recently started coming to full light. For example, in 1973 Wilbur R. Jacobs, a noted historian, refuted the earlier projections made by European and American scholars of the Indian population at the time Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere in 1492. Previous estimates had placed the Indian population of North America at about a million, and in both North and South America at no more than 8 million. However, according to Jacobs, projections which are widely accepted today place the total at 90 million for the whole of the Western Hemisphere and nearly 10 million in North America alone.<sup>lxxiii</sup> When this total of 10 million Indians living in North America is compared with the estimated 235,000 who were alive at the turn of the twentieth century, one begins to glimpse the scope of the tragedy.

Jacobs writes:

What happened to all those Indians? Cook and Dobyns, researchers in the spread of epidemic diseases among Indians, argue convincingly that millions of Indians were killed off by catastrophic disease frontiers in the form of epidemics of smallpox, bubonic plague, typhus, influenza, malaria, measles, yellow fever, and other diseases. (Besides

bringing Old World strains of virus and bacteria, Europeans brought weeds, plants, rats, insects, domestic animals, liquor, and a new technology to alter Indian life and the ecological balance wheel.) Smallpox, caused by an air-borne virus, was and is about the most deadly of the contagious diseases. Virulent strains, transmitted by air, by clothing, blankets, or by slight contact (even by an immune individual), snuffed out whole tribes, often leaving only a handful of survivors. Although some kinds of epidemic diseases might be reduced to a mild virulence among Indians (as among whites) after generations of exposure, smallpox was undoubtedly the Indians' worst killer because it returned time and again to attack surviving generations of Indians to kill them off too.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

As terrible as it was, decimation by disease was not the only tragedy to befall the descendants of Lehi. The Indians as described by Columbus were "gentle beings, souls of hospitality, curious and merry, truthful and faithful, walking in beauty and possessors of a spiritual religion."<sup>lxxv</sup> They were not prepared for the ruthless, predatory nature of the white men who came in search of gold and converts. "The situation was as if a mysterious stranger, announcing himself with words of love, welcomed with delight as a guest, embraced as a friend, given the run of the house and taken into the family's bosom, had suddenly revealed himself as no man at all but a devouring werewolf."<sup>lxxvi</sup> Immediate exploitation of the Indians as a cheap source of slave labor took place. Thousands were shipped to Europe and thousands of Europeans came to America to receive "a grant of land with accompanying unpaid, forced, Indian labor for life."<sup>lxxvii</sup> Collier writes:

But in the West Indies it was not decimation that befell the Indians--the peoples whom Columbus had found to be gentle, merry and walking in beauty--it was annihilation. Since the supply was supposed to be unlimited in the beginning, these chattel slaves were worked to death. So terrible was their life that they were driven to mass suicide, to mass infanticide, to mass abstinence from sexual life in order that children should not be born into horror. Lethal epidemics followed upon the will to die. The murders and desolations exceeded those of the most pitiless tyrants of earlier history; nor have they been surpassed since.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

Collier notes that the Indian population of Haiti and Santo Domingo, estimated to be between two and three hundred thousand when Columbus arrived, had plummeted to less than five hundred natives surviving in 1548, only fifty-six years later!<sup>lxxix</sup>

That story was repeated numerous times at the hands of men like Cortez, Pizzaro, and DeSoto, in Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States. The scenes viewed by Nephi six hundred years before Christ were fulfilled with horrible reality. As one author put it:

Here was a race in process of being engulfed in an irresistible flood of peoples of an utterly different culture. Dislocated from their accustomed seats, transplanted again and again, treated by whites as hostile encumbrances of the fertile earth to be brushed

aside or destroyed, bewildered by a type of economy for which they were unprepared, decimated by disease and vices to which they had built up no resistance, repeatedly seeing solemn treaties violated, subject to shifting governmental policies, preyed upon by incompetent and greedy officials, and at times demoralized by an excess of well intentioned but ill directed paternalistic kindness, it is a wonder that the Indians survived.<sup>lxxx</sup>

[Church Educational System, Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121-122, 1981, pp. 34-35]

Note\* If we include the Polynesians as the children of Lehi, then the picture is even more bleak. According to Bruce Sutton, when Captain Cook visited the Marquesas in 1774, he estimated there had to be a teeming population of between 50,000 and 100,000. By the time the French extended thier control over the Islands, after years of wars, diseases and deaths, the population had dropped to 20,000. This decline in population continued. By 1872, there were only 6,200 inhabitants in the Islands. The 1902 census listed only 3,500, and the 1929 census listed only 2,075 native inhabitants of the Marquesas Islands. In varying degrees, a similar story could be repeated for most of the lands of Polynesia. This was a tragic era in the history of European settlements in the Pacific.

[Bruce S. Sutton, Lehi, Father of Polynesia: Polynesians Are Nephites, p. 20]

**1 Nephi 13:14 [The Seed of My Brethren] Were Scattered before the Gentiles and Were Smitten:**

According to John Sorenson, in 1560, Father Bartolome de Las Casas estimated that forty million native Americans had perished "unjustly and through tyranny" in New Spain in the two generations after Columbus's discovery . . .

[John L. Sorenson, "Digging into the Book of Mormon," in the Ensign, Sept. 1984, p. 33] [See the commentary on Moroni 9:20]

**1 Nephi 13:14 [The seed of my brethren] were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten (Illustration):** "I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren: and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten," by A&OR. [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1105]

**1 Nephi 13:15 [The Gentiles] did prosper (Illustration):** "And I beheld the spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land," by A&OR [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1107]

### 1 Nephi 13:18 **I Beheld That the Power of God Was with Them:**

Reynolds and Sjodahl note that George Washington acknowledged the sovereignty of the Lord and the importance of religion as a condition of national success. In his Farewell Address he expresses this as follows:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked--and I ask it of you--Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation deserts the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on the minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, pp. 124-125]

### 1 Nephi 13:19 **Delivered By the Power of God:**

Jonathan Dibble writes:

Divine intervention was significant in the American victory in the Revolutionary War. Just as the Lord protected and sustained Israel anciently, he also provided for those appointed to accomplish his purposes in the American struggle for independence. It had come time to establish a nation where the gospel could be restored, where the Church of Jesus Christ could flourish in a climate of religious freedom, and from where the gospel could be carried to all nations. Inspired and sacrificing leaders, sustained by a power beyond themselves, would establish a remarkable new form of government. The time had come for the American colonists to gain their independence from England in order for Nephi's prophecy of a people "delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations" (1 Ne. 13:19) to be fulfilled and for the gospel to be restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The power that protected, sustained, and inspired the American Continental Army also prophesied of their delivery to freedom. In particular, certain events of nature helped fulfill Nephi's prophecy that "the power of the Lord [would be] with them." (1 Ne. 13:16.)

*The Plan to Take Boston*



Early in the war, the most effective strategy for the Americans was to fight, then retreat so that the inexperienced Continental Army would not engage the more disciplined, superior force of combat-hardened British troops on their own terms. As General George Washington struggled to understand fully and apply this concept so as to give his army experience and keep them out of the enemy's hands, Providence acted as their rear guard.

In February 1776, Washington planned to take Boston by first placing artillery on Dorchester Heights, overlooking Boston Harbor. He hoped to draw the British forces into a battle over Dorchester Heights, diverting their attention while he landed his army in Boston by way of the River Charles. The plan was ill advised at best; as historian James Thomas Flexner points out, the inexperienced Washington could easily have lost his prestige and half his army by committing such an engagement. If he had, "the cause could ... have collapsed." 3

On the night of 4 March 1776, Washington's men placed prefabricated fortifications on Dorchester Heights. The next morning, at daylight, the British commanders were astonished to see the gun emplacements that had been erected overnight. 4

The Americans continued to position their artillery on Dorchester Heights and the British prepared to attack these positions by embarking their troops onto Castle William, a fortified island General William Howe would use as the staging area for the British attack. All was proceeding as Washington had hoped until what one Briton described as "[a] wind more violent than everything [he] had ever heard" 5 descended on Boston. Even after the storm subsided, large waves prevented any amphibious British assault from Castle William. Plans for both the Dorchester Heights attack and Washington's capture of Boston were cancelled. Both generals—Washington of the Colonial army and Howe of the British forces—blamed the weather for their foiled plans.

Flexner points out that, had the storm not occurred, "there would have been such a battle as the Continental Army actually engaged in only once, at Fort Mifflin, when the entire American force that was engaged fell to the enemy. In all other battles, the patriots had access to escape routes through which if they found they could not stand up to the trained European regulars [they could retreat]. But the troops Washington had intended to land in Boston could never have regained their boats. They would have been trapped. They would either have had to annihilate the British or be themselves entirely defeated." 6 Such a loss by the Continentals could have meant the end of the war for independence—"the cause could either have collapsed or shriveled away." 7

The sudden, unexpected storm had saved Washington and his young army and had given him time to develop military strategies that would make the inexperienced American army more effective. Still, it would take another mistake on Long Island and another fortuitous intervention of the elements to teach General Washington the lessons he needed to learn. As

Washington grew as a leader and strategist, he did not hesitate to attribute his protection to “the gracious interposition of Heaven.” 8

### *The Long Island Campaign*

The British soon withdrew from Boston and sailed toward New York. Washington, anticipating this move, marched on New York. There, several events led to another miraculous rescue of the American soldiers.

Washington split his command and landed most of his troops on Long Island’s Brooklyn Heights. He had only ten thousand troops to guard a fifteen-mile front, while General Howe embarked approximately fifteen thousand British and Hessian soldiers at Gravesend Bay, Long Island. He left four thousand soldiers behind on Staten Island as reinforcements.

Washington had placed his troops in a dangerous position by dividing his command and positioning most of his soldiers on an island where they would be dependent upon the weather and obtaining enough boats to retreat. More important, any attempt by the Americans to retreat from Long Island could easily be cut off by the superior British naval forces that could sail up the East River. In fact, the British, by sailing up the East River, could land troops behind Washington and surround his army. The prospect for the Americans was serious. If Washington were to lose ten thousand men at the outset of the war, the Declaration of Independence would most likely not gain the public support to fuel the fires of freedom.

However, once again the elements intervened. On 26 August 1776, Howe’s reinforcements were delayed by a strong northeast wind and an ebbing tide that “compelled the fleet to drop down the bay and come to anchor.” 9 At nine o’clock the next morning, the Americans could hear the British cannons in the American rear. In a brilliant night march, the British General Henry Clinton had slipped by the east side of the Americans and had captured eight hundred prisoners, including Generals John Sullivan and William Stirling.

At this point, Washington, instead of retreating across the East River, reinforced the American positions on Brooklyn Heights and waited for Howe’s assault.

Seeing the entrenched American troops, British General Howe decided to delay his attack until the fleet had entered the East River. But the British ships were held back again by another strong northeast wind. Then torrents of rain fell, further hindering the fleet in the East River and subduing the efforts of the British troops on land. Howe began to raise siege works along Washington’s lines when, according to historian Henry B. Carrington, “The rain [became] so incessant, and accompanied by a wind so violent, that the British troops kept within their tents, and their works made slow progress.” 10

Finally, on the night of 29 August 1776, Washington, recognizing the opportunity to make a tactical retreat, ordered his troops across the East River. The first unit embarked at ten

o'clock. But at midnight, the wind changed. Just as the British advance had earlier been halted by the elements, this time the Americans' retreat was threatened with disaster. Sloops and other sailing craft could not sail, and there were too few rowboats to complete the evacuation in one night. According to Carrington, "the wind and tide were so violent that even the seamen soldiers of Massachusetts could not spread a close reefed sail upon a single vessel; and the larger vessels, upon which so much depended, would have been swept to the ocean if once entrusted to the current." 11

Washington was urged to abandon the evacuation; but then, miraculously, the wind abruptly shifted, allowing the Americans to cross the river in the predawn hours. Nine thousand men were moved in that retreat, and historian Bart McDowell records that "after dawn, as the last of the army sailed away, one young captain noted that the boats moved under 'the friendly cover of a thick fog,'" 12 which "increased the danger of panic, but also prevented discovery." 13

Historian Christopher Ward points out that "freakish Nature [had] again favored the Americans." 14 Washington "had snatched a beaten army from the very jaws of a victorious force, and practically under the nose of the greatest armada ever seen in American waters." 15

The challenge still remained, however, for Washington to keep the American army out of the hands of a pursuing, disciplined force of combat-hardened troops.

### *The Power of Fasting*

The American Continental Army retreated from Long Island to White Plains, New York. As General Howe prepared to attack the American fortifications there, he claimed he was delayed by inclement weather. Carrington notes: "A north-easter came down upon the camps at midnight, raging wildly for nearly twenty-four hours; but before the advance was attempted, Washington had again rescued his army by withdrawal to the heights of North Castle, and occupied a position too strong to warrant assault." 16

The winter of 1776 brought more trials to the Americans. Inexplicably, Washington allowed Continental forces to defend Fort Washington and Fort Lee on the Hudson River. Both forts were taken by the British shortly afterward. The American Continental Army lost hundreds of cannons and guns, more than three hundred tents, one thousand barrels of flour, and many blankets and utensils—supplies they needed for the coming winter. Men deserted, patriots defected to the enemy. Historian George Bancroft reflects upon the moments of despair for the American cause:

"The spirit of the Most High dwells among the afflicted, rather than the prosperous; and he who has never broken his bread in tears knows not the heavenly powers. The trials of Washington are the dark, solemn ground on which the beautiful work of the country's salvation was embroidered." 17

Because of the distressing condition of the tattered but unbowed soldiers, the American Continental Congress on 11 December 1776 called for a day of fasting and humiliation: “Resolved, That it be recommended to all the United States, as soon as possible to appoint a day of solemn fasting and humiliation; to implore of Almighty God the forgiveness of the many sins prevailing among all ranks, and to beg the countenance and assistance of his Providence in the prosecution of the present just and necessary war.” 18

Shortly after the resolution on fasting, three important events occurred. On 13 December 1776, General Howe disclosed his decision to suspend military operations in New Jersey until spring. He was returning to Philadelphia with most of his army, and he was making no concerted effort to pursue Washington’s army across the Delaware River. On that same date, the American General Charles Lee, who had delayed advancing his troops and who had failed to cooperate with Washington, was captured by the British. General John Sullivan (who had earlier been returned in a prisoner exchange) took Lee’s place and promptly marched to join forces with Washington, providing him with a large enough force that Washington wrote he might, “under the smiles of Providence, effect an important stroke.” 19 On that same day, 14 December 1776, Washington wrote to Governor Jonathan Trumbull and General William Heath about the possibility of initiating a counteroffensive. 20

Prodded by the approach of December 31—the expiration date of the enlistment of many of his troops—Washington decided to attack Trenton on Christmas Eve. And once again, the weather played a major role in the outcome of the battle.

Washington advanced on Trenton on the night of December 24. There was a full moon that night, but his movements were cloaked by a “sky ... so shrouded by dense clouds that darkness covered everything.” 21

Washington’s plan was to take three columns of men across the Delaware River, but because of drifting ice, 22 two of the three columns did not cross. The column that did was led by Washington, and on Christmas Day they surprised and defeated the Hessian mercenaries holding the town.

The failure of all troops to cross the river turned out to be a blessing. Had the column closest to the Hessian sentinels near Trenton crossed, they might have alerted the defenders long before Washington’s troops arrived. The Hessians could have defended Trenton until reinforced by Cornwallis, and Washington may have been trapped on the Trenton side of the Delaware without all of his troops.

This surprise victory, the first victory of the American forces, was a turning point in the war. It gave a needed morale boost to soldiers and citizens, restored confidence in Washington

as commander, and caused foreign nations to take notice of American determination and abilities.

Despite the victory, Washington still worried that his men would return home when their enlistment expired on December 31. He therefore made a personal appeal to them, pledging his own credit against the bonus he offered if they stayed another six weeks. But it was not the money that motivated the troops to stay; “the troops gathered and General Washington spoke as well as he could. Would volunteers step forward? An awkward and terrible moment followed. Not a single man stepped out. The general simply tried again, returning to repeat the arguments. Something in this second appeal struck the hearts of those cold, battlesick men. A few came forward, then more. Then almost all.” 23

After the battle of Trenton, the British moved to engage Washington. But the weather grew mild, and the British army was delayed by heavy mud on the roads. As British General Lord Cornwallis halted the night before he expected to engage the Americans, Washington held a council of war. With no retreat possible over the Delaware, he needed to find a way out of engaging Cornwallis’s troops. He decided to attack the British rear guard at Princeton.

The plan proved to be successful, but not without assistance, once again, from the weather. As Cornwallis approached, the weather grew colder, making the roads passable. Washington took advantage of the frozen roads and swept down on Princeton while a party of men decoyed Cornwallis by burning fires and making noise. The surprise attack on Princeton confused the British and allowed the Americans to retreat to secure winter quarters on the New Jersey heights.

#### *Events Preceding Yorktown*

The weather affected the outcome of several other battles as well. On 16 September 1777, Washington again faced General Howe at White House Tavern where, after the battle had begun, “a storm of unusual severity put army and ammunition out of condition for use, filled the small streams, parted the combatants, and ultimately gave to the British the barren acquisition of the city.” 24

Fog intervened in favor of the Americans a few weeks later at Germantown, on October 4, when an American offensive against General Howe “was neutralized and turned into a repulse by the interposition of dense fog, which confused the troops and compelled a retreat, but thereby secured the [Americans] from the pressure of overwhelming forces” 25 sent by Cornwallis to General Howe’s aid.

With divine intervention, the American army had not only survived in spite of mistakes and misjudgments, but had also managed to strike a few blows. But an even greater challenge to the American Continental Army’s endurance lay ahead—at Valley Forge during the winter of 1777–78.

The American Continental Army had received the Lord's assistance a number of times. But few times did they need his help more than in the winter of 1777–78 at Valley Forge. The American troops were besieged with cold and hunger, suffering from bitter weather, tattered clothing, and insufficient food. Surgeon Albigense Waldo described the conditions in his diary:

“Here comes a bowl of beef soup full of dead leaves and dirt. There comes a soldier. His bare feet are seen through his worn-out shoes—his legs nearly naked from the tattered remains of an only pair of stockings—his Breeches are not sufficient to cover his nakedness—his shirt hanging in Strings—his hair disheveled—his face meagre.” 26

Some authors refer to a dramatic, unusual early spawning of shad, a type of fish found in many Atlantic Coastal Rivers, up the Schuylkill River that runs through Valley Forge. They claim that on 23 February 1778, this event alleviated the famine. 27 Throughout these months, Washington continued to be plagued with insubordination of officers, 28 lack of support by government officials and members of Congress, supply delivery problems, and loyalists who continued to supply the British. It seems only natural that, amid such problems, Washington would seek divine guidance to aid in the future course of the American colonists' cause.

Although some historians regard Washington's prayers at Valley Forge as apocryphal, records indicate that he knew the power of prayer. In one order, he directed all officers and soldiers “by their unfeigned and pious observance of their religious duties, [to] incline to the Lord, and Giver of Victory, to prosper our arms.” 29 At the conclusion of the alliance with France, on 5 May 1778, he directed:

“It having pleased the Almighty Ruler of the Universe propitiously to defend the Cause of the United American-States and finally by raising us up a powerful friend among the Princes of the Earth to establish our Liberty and Independence up[on] lasting foundations, it becomes us to set apart a day for gratefully acknowledging the divine Goodness and celebrating the important event which we owe to his benign Interposition.” 30

On 20 October 1781, at the victory of Yorktown, Washington issued a similar announcement. 31 And later, while president, he issued thanksgiving proclamations resembling those issued during the war. 32

While Washington's references to Deity, prayer, and thanksgiving do not reveal him to be an eighteenth-century orthodox Christian, 33 he did recognize the reality of a Creator. Since he expressed his gratitude for divine assistance on many occasions, it is likely that he prayed for that assistance in his leadership and decision-making. If so, the conditions at Valley Forge would most certainly have elicited a petition to our Father in Heaven.

In any event, prospects for the American cause began to improve. On 15 July 1779, General Anthony Wayne captured a British garrison at Stony Point on the Hudson River. The British fleet, hearing of the battle, prepared to sail up the Hudson River and engage the Continentals before Washington's sources of intelligence anticipated. <sup>34</sup> The sudden arrival of the raiding British fleet could have turned that American victory into a defeat. However, the fleet was held back by unusual, strong, northerly winds that "came sweeping down the Hudson River." <sup>35</sup> This gave Washington time to take the captured supplies and disappear before the British forces of General Clinton arrived.

The courageous attack on and capture of Stony Point marked the end of British raids on New England, and it renewed the commitment of American allies. The focus of the war now shifted to the southern states, where several events during 1780 and 1781 set the stage for the decisive Battle of Yorktown.

Two American victories highlighted the winter of 1780–81. On 7 October 1780, the Americans defeated the British forces at Kings Mountain, South Carolina. Three months later, American General Daniel Morgan smashed the forces of British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton at Cowpens, South Carolina. Some historians claim that the American Morgan offered battle at Cowpens partly because the swollen Broad River was running deep and fast across his line of retreat. In any case, these two battles resulted in Cornwallis's loss of the best elements of his light-armed infantry. <sup>36</sup>

After the Battle of Cowpens, General Cornwallis pursued American General Greene to the North Carolina-Virginia border. He assembled his troops on the banks of the Catawba River and attempted to convert his entire force into light infantry—even destroying his personal baggage train in order to pursue Greene more swiftly. But his efforts were unsuccessful. By the time he caught up with the Americans, they were on the other side of the Catawba River, swollen after the American crossing "on account of a great fall of rain." <sup>37</sup>

Another river-crossing problem prevented British-American confrontation a month later. The British army under Cornwallis made a forced march over bad roads through heavy rain to intercept Greene before he crossed the Yadkin River at Trading Ford. The British reached the ford at midnight, only to learn that Greene had crossed earlier in the evening, taking all the available boats with him.

After several days' delay caused by the weather, General Cornwallis attempted to cross the Dan River into Virginia to intercept the American troops. Again, the Americans had crossed the day before, taking all the boats with them.

Obviously, some historians scoff at references to "instances of providential succour," <sup>38</sup> saying that General Greene's knowledge of the terrain and his carefully-laid plans caused the American victories. But others point to the amazingly propitious timing of the rising rivers as

evidence that “these determining events ... are not beyond the recognition of nature’s Master.”  
39 Had the Americans not been able to keep ahead of the British forces, they could have been forced into a major engagement with an anxious, determined Cornwallis. 40 One historian states, “If Greene’s little army were overtaken and destroyed, Cornwallis would find his way to join forces with the British in Virginia. ... The whole region would be completely and perhaps finally subjugated and permanently held by the British Crown.” 41

Greene’s exhausted American troops pushed on. Historian Christopher Ward describes their camp:

“They never set up a tent. The heat of the fires was the only protection from rain and sometimes snow. They started each day at three in the morning and hastened forward to gain a distance ahead of their pursuers that would give them time for breakfast—breakfast, dinner, and supper in one—because this was their only meal for the day.” 42

Plagued by desertion, sickness, and a lack of supplies, Cornwallis gave up the chase of Greene’s men and marched to Hillsboro, North Carolina, to rally support for his army. After winning a battle at Guilford Courthouse that cost the British many casualties, Cornwallis moved back into Virginia. Even though the Americans had been defeated in that encounter, the American army was still intact after an orderly retreat.

The stage was set for the Battle of Yorktown.

#### Yorktown

The British defeat at Yorktown proved fatal to British rule of the United States. This time, the elements, which had intervened to aid and protect the Americans time and again, year after year, foiled Cornwallis’s escape.

It helped, too, that Cornwallis found himself in Virginia without assistance from the British fleet in the York River. Admiral de Grasse and his French fleet had inflicted damage on the British fleet, and Admiral Graves had taken the English ships back to Sandy Hook, New York, for refitting. The British fleet arrived in New York about the same time Washington and the French Count de Rochambeau reached Williamsburg for the siege of Yorktown.

Cornwallis was not prepared for the siege. He had sent three thousand of his troops to Sir Henry Clinton to protect New York from a rebel attack, and he had not anticipated that the French and Americans would have heavy siege guns. Undermanned and receiving bombardment from the allies, Cornwallis withdrew from the outer defense lines of Yorktown and set up headquarters in a cave.



By 16 October 1781, Cornwallis knew that remaining in Yorktown would lead to British surrender. That night, he attempted to escape across the York River by boat. Once again the elements intervened. He described that night in a letter to British General Clinton:

“Sixteen large boats were prepared, and upon other pretexts were ordered to be in readiness to receive troops precisely at ten o’clock. With these I hoped to pass the infantry during the night, abandoning our baggage, and leaving a detachment to capitulate for the town’s people, and the sick and wounded. ... After making my arrangements with the utmost secrecy, ... at this critical moment, the weather from being moderate and calm, changed to a most violent storm of wind and rain, and drove all the boats, some of which had troops on board, down the river. It was soon evident that the intended passage was impracticable, and the absence of the boats rendered it equally impossible to bring back the troops that had passed.” 43

The French fleet had not sealed off the York River above Yorktown, and had Cornwallis been able to ferry his army across the river and march northward, he might have been picked up by the British fleet on the Delaware. 44 In fact, Washington feared that just such a move by Cornwallis would deprive the American allies of a decisive victory over the British. 45

As it was, Cornwallis was forced to make a formal surrender to Washington on 19 October 1781. Although the Treaty of Paris was not signed until 1783, the war in America, for all intents and purposes, was over. The wind that had saved Washington at the war’s outset also sealed the fate of the British at the war’s conclusion.

### *Conclusion*

Heroic patriots alone did not achieve the American victory. Without providential intervention, the small, outnumbered force of Americans would not have won their independence. But an American victory was essential in order for a new nation to be established where the gospel of Jesus Christ could be restored.

The events that had transpired fulfilled the prophecy that Nephi had written more than 2,300 years earlier:

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

“And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them.

“And I beheld that the power of our Father in Heaven was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.

“And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.” (1 Ne. 13:16–19.)

Washington recognized the hand of our Father in Heaven in America's struggle. His final military order of the war, issued 18 April 1783, noted the assistance of the Creator:

"The Commander in chief orders the Cessation of Hostilities between the United States of America and the King of Great Britain to be publickly proclaimed tomorrow at 12 o'clock ... after which the Chaplains with the several Brigades will render thanks to almighty God for all his mercies." 46

Examining the events of the American Revolution with an eye of faith shows that the Lord directed events to accomplish his purposes. An environment was now established in which an inspired constitution could be created that would provide a level of religious freedom vital for the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.



"March to Valley Forge," by William T. Trego. Courtesy of Valley Forge Historical Society. [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)



“Fort Washington Revolutionary War,” by Dominique Serres, [commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org)  
British men-of-war force a passage up the Hudson River between Fort Lee, high on the New Jersey Palisades, and Fort Washington, on the New York bank. American fire and obstructions proved ineffective against the British, who took Fort Washington and 2,818 prisoners. After this defeat, the American Continental Congress, on 11 December 1776, called for a day of fasting. Shortly afterward came a turning point in the war.



George Washington Crossing the Delaware

[playle.com](https://playle.com)

On Christmas Eve, 1776, Washington planned to take three columns of soldiers across the Delaware River to Trenton. Because of heavy ice flows, only one column was able to cross, and they surprised and defeated Hessian troops holding the town. The intervening ice turned out to be a blessing. Had the column of soldiers nearest the Hessian sentinels been able to cross the river, they might have alerted the defenders long before Washington’s troops arrived.





The Battle of Cowpens

Daniel Morgan “whipped” Banastre Tarleton at Cowpens in January 1781. Some historians claim that Morgan offered battle at Cowpens partly because the swollen Broad River was running deep and fast across the British line of retreat. In this painting of the battle, Colonel William Washington (foreground) is saved from sabers by the timely arrival of a pistol-armed waiter.



“The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown,” by John Trumbull [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)

By 16 October 1781, General Cornwallis knew that remaining in Yorktown would lead to British surrender. That night he attempted to escape across the York River by boat, but a violent storm rendered it impossible. In this painting of the British surrender at Yorktown, Benjamin Lincoln (on the white horse) offers to receive the surrender from Cornwallis's aide. The action is observed by the French at left and the Americans at right.

[Jonathan A. Dibble, "Delivered by the Power of God": The American Revolution and Nephi's Prophecy," *Ensign*, LDS Church, October 1987]

[Note\* The Revolutionary War was not the first time that timely weather conditions had come to the military aid of American colonists. In 1746, for example, a fleet of forty French ships of war was sailing to attack New England. Upon learning of the impending danger, many inhabitants of Boston called for a season of fasting and prayer. It is reported that while pastors were praying in Boston, "a tempest ensued, in which the greater part of the French fleet was wrecked on the coast of Nova Scotia" ending the French attempt at conquest. See E. A. Park and S. H. Taylor, eds., *The Bibliotheca Sacra and American Biblical Repository* (Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1855), 12:187.]

[Note\* Following the Nephite victory, Moroni told Zerahemnah, the Lamanite leader: "But now, ye behold that the Lord is with us; and ye behold that he has delivered you into our hands. ... this is done unto us because of our ... faith in Christ. And now ye see that ye cannot destroy this our faith." See Alma 44:3]

### 1 Nephi 13:19 **Delivered By the Power of God:**

Kenneth L. Alford writes that in contrast to Lehi's tree of life vision, which is not tied to specific historical events, Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 is brimming with historical details, references, and prophetic insights. In 1 Nephi 13, Nephi was probably shown the successful struggle surrounding the birth of the United States<sup>[1]</sup> and the fact that the Lord would use his power to influence the outcome.

Nephi wrote "that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity" would "humble themselves before the Lord" so they could be "delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations" (1 Nephi 13:16, 19). Nephi foresaw "the restoration of the gospel six hundred years before the Savior's birth, and the events leading up to it were shown him in considerable detail,"<sup>[2]</sup> namely concerning the colonization of North America and the American Revolution.

The sheer improbability of an American victory in the Revolutionary War is staggering. By all the standard measures of military contests—population, power, wealth, size and experience of the respective armies and navies, depth and experience of each country's military

leadership, diplomatic power and connections, political organization—Great Britain should easily have been victorious. To face the most professional army and navy in the world, the American colonists could field only an army of volunteer militia and a few undergunned ships. As the historian Robert Thompson noted: “Especially great were the difficulties of America from the lack of the manufactures [sic] needed to equip and support an army. They had no cloths to make uniforms, no canvas for tents, no shoes and no leather to make them, no cannon save such as they could borrow or buy in Europe, no gunpowder for either large or small arms, no bunting for flags. Twice the patriotic women of Philadelphia searched their household stores, and sent every blanket they could spare to Washington’s forces; and the awnings from the shops, the sails from the ships, and the contents of the sail-lofts went to make tents.”[3]

Never before had colonies militarily defeated their mother country and established themselves as an independent republic. Early Americans recognized the Lord’s hand in their unlikely victory over Great Britain. On July 2, 1776, when the Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence and pledged to each other their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor, they did so “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.”[4] Throughout the Revolutionary War and the decades that followed, Americans openly acknowledged God’s intervention on their behalf.

During 1976, the American bicentennial year, President Ezra Taft Benson commented, “Secular scholarship, though useful, provides an incomplete and sometimes inaccurate view of our history. The real story of America is one which shows the hand of God in our nation’s beginning.”[5] It is fair to ask, then, what evidence exists to demonstrate that the power of God was with the American cause during the fight for independence? And how widely recognized was that assistance?

If we look at events through the eyes of faith, we will find numerous instances of divine assistance. As the Reverend John F. Bigelow stated in a Civil War–era sermon, “My purpose is simply to verify, by a few brief references, the presence of God’s hand.”[7] In the interest of space and time, we will examine just [two] ~~three~~ of the many possible instances of Divine Providence, “the power of God,” coming to the aid of the fledgling colonies: George Washington and the Founding Fathers, ~~the wartime weather~~, and the great chain across the Hudson River in New York at West Point.

### *Washington and the Founding Fathers*

In addressing the events of the Revolutionary War, Nephi referred to the American colonists as “the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity,” and he noted that they “did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them” (1 Nephi 13:16). As if to stress the recognition that God would be on their side, in the following three verses Nephi again clearly states that he “beheld that the power of God was with them” (v. 18) and that they would be “delivered by the power of God” (v. 19).

It is truly inspiring to study the humility, character, competence, and integrity of the great men God assembled to give birth to the American republic. As Bigelow noted, the “same Providence which gave us Washington, gave us others also, who were worthy to be his brothers, if not his peers in the common cause of the country.”[8] At a White House dinner on April 29, 1962, President John F. Kennedy, not entirely in jest, acknowledged how unique the Founding Fathers were when he told a distinguished gathering of Nobel Prize winners, “I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.”[9] In latter-day scripture, the Lord announced the very personal interest that he had taken regarding the birth of the United States. The Founding Fathers, he declared in section 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants, were “wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose” (D&C 101:80). Bigelow also stated: “The American cause needed men of far-sighted sagacity, of regulative talent, of constitutive ideas, of able statesmanship. It needed men of diplomatic abilities, those who would be faithful at home, and just abroad. It needed men of incorruptible patriotism, those who would fill the offices of Government, not in the interest of self, but in that of the country. How adequately God supplied the men to meet these demands, our constitutional history leaves us in no doubt.”[10]

The Founding Fathers were truly men “furnished by Providence.”[11] During the April 1898 general conference, President Wilford Woodruff said, “I am going to bear my testimony to this assembly, if I never do it again in my life, that those men who laid the foundation of this American government . . . were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth. These were choice spirits, not wicked men. General Washington and all the men that labored for the purpose were inspired of the Lord.”[12] Interestingly, it was to President Woodruff that those men appeared at the St. George Temple in 1877 requesting that their temple work be completed. President Benson shared his conviction regarding America’s Founding Fathers that “when one casts doubt about the character of these noble sons of God, I believe he or she will have to answer to the God of heaven for it.”[13]

While all of the Founding Fathers contributed significantly, in their own way, to the establishment of the United States of America, one man was absolutely essential—George Washington. Referring to Washington in an 1841 nationally published sermon, the Reverend George Cheever stated that “Divine Providence had, for years, been giving him special training for his work. . . . I cannot but think that the hand of God was signally manifest, and in nothing more so than in giving us just such a man as our Washington. . . . It is not too much to say that, had he been a different man, in the slightest essential degree, . . . he would have failed . . . and the American cause would have been lost.”[14]

God’s protection and intervention to bring about an American victory in the Revolutionary War, as foretold in Nephi’s vision, was demonstrated many times during George Washington’s life. There are several historical accounts when Washington—like Samuel, the Lamanite—had his life

miraculously preserved. One early incident occurred in the summer of 1755 during the French and Indian War. As a twenty-three-year-old aide-de-camp, Washington accompanied General Edward Braddock's regiments into the Ohio region, where they were attacked on July 9, 1755, by French and Indian forces at the Battle of the Monongahela. Braddock and over half of the approximately 1,300 British regulars were killed or wounded. Colonel Washington, although not officially in the chain of command, organized survivors and helped the army retire from the field. In a letter to his brother John, written from Fort Cumberland a few days following the battle, Washington acknowledged his miraculous escape. "As I have heard since my arriv'l at this place, a circumstantial acct. of my death and dying speech," he wrote, "I take this early opportunity of contradicting both, and of assuring you that I now exist and appear in the land of the living by the miraculous care of Providence, that protected me beyond all human expectation; I had four Bullets through my Coat, and two Horses shot under me, and yet escaped unhurt." [15]

In his 1843 book *The Life of George Washington*, historian Jared Sparks related an incident told by Dr. James Craik, a boyhood and lifelong friend of Washington's who was with him at the Battle of the Monongahela. Craik was also one of the three doctors who attended to Washington on his deathbed at Mount Vernon in 1799. Craik reported that fifteen years after the Battle of the Monongahela, he and Washington travelled together on an expedition to the western country, with a party of woodsmen, for the purpose of exploring wild lands. While near the junction of the Great Kenhawa and Ohio Rivers, a company of Indians came to them with an interpreter, at the head of whom was an aged and venerable chief. This personage made known to them by the interpreter, that, hearing Colonel Washington was in that region, he had come a long way to visit him, adding, that, during the battle of the Monongahela, he had singled him out as a conspicuous object, fired his rifle at him many times, and directed his young warriors to do the same, but to his utter astonishment none of their balls took effect. He was then persuaded, that the youthful hero was under the special guardianship of the Great Spirit, and immediately ceased to fire at him. He was now come to pay homage to the man, who was the particular favorite of Heaven, and who could never die in battle. [16]

Similar incidents happened to Washington during the course of the Revolutionary War. In January 1777, for example, in an effort to halt a possible American retreat at the Battle of Princeton, General Washington rode into the thick of the battle and positioned himself directly between the fighting American and British soldiers. Although he was mounted on a horse and sitting just a few dozen yards from the nearest British riflemen with "a thousand deaths flying around him," [17] he again miraculously escaped unharmed.

Recognizing George Washington as the "Father of His Country" is not simply an honorific title, it is also a statement of fact. Over a century ago, the historian Robert Thompson called Washington "God's unique gift to America." [18] Contemporaries and historians alike have long noted that George Washington, more than any other individual, was responsible for the success of the American Revolutionary cause. His character, temperament, experience, and faith were



uniquely suited to the heavy and almost impossible demands placed upon him; he was “called to perform a particular work, a work allowing him to be nothing other than just what he was. His destiny . . . was, with the scanty resources furnished to his hands, and with fearful odds against him, to lay the foundations of this great American Republic.”[19] Truly, “the power of God was with [him]” (1 Nephi 13:18).

Following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, King George III of Great Britain asked Benjamin West, an American-born artist living in London, if he had heard any information regarding what George Washington might do after the war. West replied, “Oh, they say he will return to his farm.” “If he does that,” said the king, referring to the fact that Washington would voluntarily be giving up a position of great power, “he will be the greatest man in the world.”[20] Many generations of Americans would concur with the king’s assessment.

### *West Point Chain*

God, who knows “the end from the beginning” (Abraham 2:8), knew exactly what the American colonists would need to secure victory in the Revolutionary War in order to provide a suitable environment for the Restoration a few decades later. The final evidence discussed here of God’s prophesied hand in America’s Revolutionary victory, as recorded by Nephi in the Book of Mormon, involves a river, iron ore, a very large chain, and God’s inspiration to bring them together.

The important role that the Hudson River played in America’s Revolutionary War victory can hardly be overstated. As General Washington wrote to General Israel Putnam, the American commander in the Hudson Highlands, on December 2, 1777, “The importance of the Hudson river in the present contest and the necessity of defending it, are subjects which have been so frequently and so fully discussed and are so well understood, that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon them.”[33] If the British had retained possession of the river throughout the war, they would have effectively cut the American colonies in half. Just one month after shots were fired in Massachusetts at Lexington and Concord, the Continental Congress passed its first resolution addressing the strategic importance of American forces controlling the river.[34] From 1776 to early 1778, the colonists failed several times to retain command of the river (using booms, chevaux-de-frise, sunken vessels, fire-rafts, and other obstacles). . . .

The idea of using a chain to block the Hudson was sound, but the initial execution was flawed. At the insistence of General Washington, who was at Valley Forge, and the New York Fortifications Commission, plans were made to retry placing a chain across the river approximately fifty miles north of New York City at West Point. On February 2, 1778, a government contract was executed to forge a new chain that would stretch across the Hudson a few miles upriver from the site of the original chain. The contract was signed late Saturday night and by “daylight on Sunday morning the forges were in operation.”[35] West Point, the

“keystone of the country,”[36] was the perfect location for the new chain. A double bend in the river there required sailing ships to stop and tack not once but twice as they passed West Point and nearby Constitution Island. In an engineering feat that would be difficult to duplicate even today, the chain was manufactured from start to finish in just six weeks. Creation of the chain was so important that the government’s contract specified that workmen were exempted from military duty throughout the period of its construction. When finished on April 1, 1778, the chain weighed an estimated 186 tons and was over five hundred yards long. The hundreds of individual chain links ranged from 2¼ to 3½ inches thick and from two to three feet in length; there were also eight swivels and 80 clevises.[37] When stretched across the river, sections of chain floated on pitch-covered logs a few feet beneath the surface of the water.

The chain was deployed on April 30, 1778. With several forts, numerous redoubts, artillery, and soldiers effectively placed on both sides of the river, the installation of the great chain at West Point ensured American control of the Hudson River until the end of the war. During the remaining years of conflict, the chain was removed from the river each winter and replaced each spring on dates chosen by General Washington. West Point became so strategically and tactically important that it was the West Point fortification plans that General Benedict Arnold gave to Major John Andre when he infamously betrayed his country. The American chain that stretched across the Hudson denied British forces access to the river north of West Point throughout the duration of the war.

While the significance of the great chain at West Point is often recognized by historians, the circumstances behind the chain’s actual construction are less widely known. How could such a massive construction project be completed by a fledgling country in such a brief period during wartime? Simply stated, the creation of the chain at West Point was another example of Divine Providence. It was an act of Providence that one of the largest and richest iron deposits in the world is located just a few miles from West Point.[38] The Sterling iron works near West Point were established a few decades before the Revolutionary War.[39] The New York Fortifications Committee insisted that “the chain should be immediately made of the very best iron the Country afforded,”[40] and the Sterling iron works were widely recognized as producing some of the highest grade iron in the world. The government’s February 1778 contract specifically required that the chain must be made of “the best Sterling iron.”[41] As a New Englander noted shortly before the war, “Of all the other countries of the world, Nature has best fitted the Northern [American] Colonies for the iron manufacture.”[42] The rich, black magnetite ore at Sterling was 60 to 70 percent pure, which meant that it was “easily broken into chunks sufficiently pure to bypass customary and time-consuming 18th century washing and drying procedures,”[43] enabling the chain to be completed and emplaced in record time. Seven forges and ten welding fires were kept in operation around the clock. The famously cold winter of 1777–78 that severely tested soldiers at Valley Forge proved to be a blessing at the Sterling Forge, where it alleviated the intense heat of the forges,[44] and the great chain that stretched across the Hudson contributed significantly to the ultimate American victory.

## *Recognizing God's Hand*

How exciting it is to be able to recognize the hand of God in the events of history and to understand the truthfulness of his words. Contemporary statements acknowledging God's hand in the outcome of the American Revolution are too numerous to include here; a few samples will suffice. Washington was especially aware of God's role in his victories. In May 1778, after learning that Benjamin Franklin had successfully negotiated an alliance with France, General Washington, from his headquarters at Valley Forge, noted in a general order to his soldiers that it had "pleased the Almighty ruler of the Universe propitiously to defend the Cause of the United American-States." [45]

In an August 20, 1778, letter, Washington wrote, "The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this, that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations." [46]

On October 20, 1781, George Washington urged his soldiers to attend a special public meeting to show "gratitude of Heart" for the "astonishing interpositions of Providence." [47]

Throughout the course of the war, Washington commented a dozen times regarding the "smiles of Heaven" [48] upon the American cause. He also frequently acknowledged "the support of the Supreme power" and "the patronage of Heaven." [49]

In his Farewell Orders to the Continental Army, dated November 2, 1783, Washington wrote, "A contemplation of the complete attainment (at a period earlier than could be expected) of the object for which we contended against so formidable a power, cannot but inspire us with astonishment and gratitude. The disadvantageous circumstances on our part, under which the war was undertaken, can never be forgotten. The singular interpositions of Providence in our feeble condition were such, as could scarcely escape the attention of the most unobserving." [50]

During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Benjamin Franklin noted that, "In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor." [51]

Numerous other participants expressed their belief regarding God's direct hand in their astonishing and highly unlikely victory. Charles Pinckney, a signer of the Constitution from South Carolina, acknowledged, "Nothing less than the superintending hand of Providence . . . miraculously carried us through the war." [52] James Madison, often referred to as the father of the Constitution, declared, "It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it [the Constitution] a finger of that Almighty hand which has been so frequently and signally

extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution.”[53] Church leaders across the nation frequently reminded their congregations of the Lord’s hand in their affairs. During the War of 1812, a Christian minister named John Dunlap insisted:

Without presumption we may assert, that the Lord appeared in behalf of America, during the arduous struggle with her parent state, Great Britain, before her independence. . . . America was destitute of armies, munitions of war and foreign connections: she had only God and the goodness of her cause to rely upon; but these were sufficient. . . . In the short space of seven years, the most powerful and warlike nation in the world, relinquished all authority over a number of her provinces, which she had treated as rebels, and acknowledged them sovereign independent states. This was the work of the Lord, and glorious in our eyes.[54]

History bears witness to the fulfillment of the vision of the American Revolution that Nephi received and recorded two thousand years earlier.

#### *America a Safe Haven for the Restoration*

Latter-day Saint history is full of confirming testimony regarding the Lord’s hand in the establishment of the United States. As recorded in prophecy and illuminated by prophetic commentary, we understand that the “destiny of America was divinely decreed.”[55] President Brigham Young explained that the leaders of the American Revolution “were inspired by the Almighty, to throw off the shackles of the mother government, with her established religion.”[56] Elder Perry taught that “the establishment of the United States was a part of God’s plan and was brought about by men who were inspired and guided by God.” He also claimed, “One must merely study history to know that to defeat the world’s most powerful country by a group of fledgling colonies was a result of a force greater than man.”[57]

For what purpose, then, did the Lord consciously intervene in the affairs of men in order to secure an American victory in the Revolutionary War? Elder Mark E. Petersen boldly proclaimed that “there was only one reason why the United States came into being—only one reason. It is a different reason from anything that we know in any other nation. There is a United States only because God planned to restore the gospel in the last days and he had to have a free country in which to do it.”[58] The establishment of the United States was “a prologue to the restoration of the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ,”[59] and the Constitution was established to maintain “the rights and protection of all flesh” (D&C 101:77). As the Reverend John Bigelow pointed out in 1861, “God’s Providence comes in among [us], disturbing and arranging to suit its own ends.”[60]

#### *Summary*

Following his Resurrection, the Savior declared that “it is wisdom in the Father that they [the Gentiles] should be established in this land, and set up as a free people by the power of the Father” (3 Nephi 21:4). The American Revolutionary War “redeemed the land by the shedding of blood” (D&C 101:80) and prepared the way for the Restoration of the gospel that began in upstate New York during the spring of 1820.

In the book of Ether, Moroni briefly summarized the conditions for retaining possession of this land, “Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ” (Ether 2:12). Nephi emphasized those responsibilities when he wrote, “Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever” (2 Nephi 1:7).

God’s influence and intervention in the birth of the American Republic is not discussed today as frequently or as openly as it once was. We would do well to consider and privately answer three questions that Reverend Bigelow asked his listeners in July 1861, “To what other nation has God given such a history? To none. Then are we adequately conscious of, and adequately grateful for, the signal distinction which has been vouchsafed to us? Do we appreciate the peculiarities of our past history and our present condition?”[61]

The United States of America was established so that the Lord would have a suitable place to restore his gospel. In 1841, George B. Cheever, an American minister, pointed out that in “every respect our origin imposes upon us vast obligations.”[62] It is our responsibility to live worthy of our political and religious heritage and to reverence and protect what we have received.

The more we study Nephi’s vision in the Book of Mormon and compare it with the history of the American Revolution, the more we will appreciate and recognize God’s hand in assisting the American colonists to bring about their ultimate, and highly improbable, victory. The birth of the United States of America was truly a miracle wrought by the power of God, just as Nephi saw in vision over twenty-three centuries earlier.

## Notes

[1] While additional prophetic commentary may yet be added in the future, Elders Ezra Taft Benson and Marion G. Romney identified “the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:15) with the American colonies, “their mother Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:17) with the British, the “battle against them” (1 Nephi 13:17) with the American Revolutionary War, and being “delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations” (1 Nephi 13:19) with the American colonies winning their freedom as a result of the Revolutionary War. See

Ezra Taft Benson, "God's Hand in Our Nation's History," in 1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Bicentennial Devotional and Fireside Addresses (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 299, and Marion G. Romney, "America's Fate and Ultimate Destiny," same volume, 322–23.

[2] Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 23.

[3] Robert Ellis Thompson, *The Hand of God in American History: A Study of National Politics* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1902), 53.

[4] The United States Declaration of Independence.

[5] Benson, "God's Hand in Our Nation's History," 301.

[6] L. Tom Perry, "The Church and the American Bicentennial," in 1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Bicentennial Devotional and Fireside Addresses (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 63.

[7] Rev. John F. Bigelow, *The Hand of God in American History: A Discourse Delivered in the Baptist Church, Reeseville, N. Y., July 7, 1861* (Burlington, VT: W. H. & C. A. Hoyt, 1861), 24.

[8] Bigelow, *Hand of God in American History*, 23.

[9] Quotations of John F. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Quotations+of+John+F+Kennedy.htm>.

[10] Bigelow, *Hand of God in American History*, 24.

[11] Bigelow, *Hand of God in American History*, 26.

[12] Wilford Woodruff, in *Conference Report*, April 1898, 89.

[13] Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 604.

[14] Bigelow, *Hand of God in American History*, 21.

[15] George Washington to John Augustine Washington, July 18, 1755, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/mgwquery.html>.

[16] Jared Sparks, *The Life of George Washington* (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1843), 66n.

[17] Michael Stephenson, *Patriot Battles: How the War of Independence Was Fought* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 265–66.

[18] Thompson, *Hand of God in American History*, 57.

- [19] Bigelow, *Hand of God in American History*, 21.
- [20] Paul Johnson, *George Washington: The Founding Father* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 78.
- [21] Merriam Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., "wrath."
- [22] Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 827.
- [23] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1977), 299.
- [24] General Henry B. Carrington, *Washington the Soldier* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 77.
- [25] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 300.
- [26] George Washington to Landon Carter, March 25, 1776, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*.
- [27] Benjamin Tallmadge, *Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge* (New York: Thomas Holman, 1858), 10–11.
- [28] Tallmadge, *Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge*, 11–12.
- [29] Statement of Samuel DeForest in John C. Dann, ed., *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 43.
- [30] John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 184.
- [31] Regarding the crossing of the Catawba River, Henry Watson wrote, "Thus was Morgan's division saved, as if by the interposition of Providence. This circumstance was generally regarded by the Americans as an evidence of the justice of their cause." Regarding the incident at the Yadkin, he said, "This was regarded by the Americans as a second interposition of Providence in their behalf." See Henry C. Watson, *History of the United States of America, from the Discovery to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1854), 520–23.
- [33] George Washington to Israel Putnam, December 2, 1777, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*.
- [34] See MacGrane Coxe, "The Sterling Furnace and the West Point Chain: An Historical Address" (New York: privately printed, 1906), 3.
- [35] Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1860), 1:706n1.
- [36] Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, 1:706.

[37] A clevis is a U-shaped metal fastener connected by a bolt that allows portions of a chain to rotate and move freely. For additional physical details regarding the great chain at West Point see Lincoln Diamant, *Chaining the Hudson: The Fight for the River in the American Revolution* (New York: Citadel Press, 1994), 142.

[38] Coxe, "The Sterling Furnace," 51n2.

[39] "Sterling" is also spelled "Stirling" in some early accounts.

[40] Diamant, *Chaining the Hudson*, 141.

[41] Coxe, "The Sterling Furnace," 19.

[42] Quoted in Diamant, *Chaining the Hudson*, 145.

[43] Diamant, *Chaining the Hudson*, 142. Sterling's igneous magnetite ore ( $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$ ) was much richer than the standard sedimentary hematite ( $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_3$ ) found in many other iron deposits. See Diamant, *Chaining the Hudson*, 151.

[44] Diamant, *Chaining the Hudson*, 152.

[45] George Washington, May 5, 1778, General Orders, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*.

[46] George Washington to Thomas Nelson Jr., August 20, 1778, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*.

[47] George Washington, October 20, 1781, General Orders, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*.

[48] See, for example, George Washington to Continental Congress, August 22, 1776, and George Washington to Israel Putnam, September 10, 1777, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*. To view all instances, visit <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/mgwquery.html> and enter "smiles of Providence" as the search text.

[49] George Washington, December 23, 1783, Resignation Address, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*.

[50] George Washington to Continental Army, November 2, 1783, Farewell Orders, in *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*.

[51] Henry D. Gilpin, ed., *The Papers of James Madison* (Mobile, AL: Allston Mygatt, 1842), 2:984–85.



[52] Charles Pinckney, *The State Gazette of South Carolina*, May 5, 1788, in E. H. Scott, ed., *The Federalist and Other Contemporary Papers on the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1894), 710.

[53] Benson, "God's Hand in Our Nation's History," 304.

[54] John Dunlap, *The Power, Justice and Mercy of Jehovah, Exercised upon his Enemies and his People: A Sermon Delivered on Board the Fleet, at Whitehall, December 12, 1814* (Albany: Websters and Skinners, 1815), 25–26.

[55] Benson, "God's Hand in Our Nation's History," 298.

[56] John A. Widtsoe, ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 359.

[57] L. Tom Perry, "The Church and the American Bicentennial," in *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Bicentennial Devotional and Fireside Addresses* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 61, 64.

[58] Mark E. Petersen, "America—World Leader," in *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Bicentennial Devotional and Fireside Addresses* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 348.

[59] Benson, "God's Hand in Our Nation's History," 315.

[60] Bigelow, *Hand of God in American History*, 11.

[61] Bigelow, *Hand of God in American History*, 26.

[62] George B. Cheever, *God's Hand in America* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1841), 87.

[Kenneth L. Alford, "Delivered by the Power of God': Nephi's Vision of America's Birth," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, pp. 264-281]

Kenneth L. Alford, "Delivered by the Power of God': Nephi's Vision of America's Birth," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision* (2011 Sperry Symposium), ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 264–81.

## 1 Nephi 13:19 **Delivered By the Power of God**

Ida Stover Eisenhower was the mother of Dwight David Eisenhower, who commanded the allied powers to victory in World War II. David Brooks writes that Ida's mother died when she was nearly five years old, and her father died when she was eleven years old. Afterward

the family of eleven children were scattered to distant relatives. Ida became a housekeeper yet by early adolescence she had memorized 1,365 Bible verses in six months on her own and was self-motivated to improve herself.

Ida married and raised five boys. Dwight would later call her “the finest person I’ve ever known.” (n4) The family prayed and read the Bible every day, taking turns at reading. Later in life, although military duties took him away from strict organized religious services, Dwight could cite bible verses with ease. After World War II ended, and when Dwight Eisenhower took the presidential oath of office, Ida asked him to have the Bible open to 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

[David Brooks, The Road to Character, 48-59]

#### 1 Nephi 13:19 **Delivered By the Power of God:**

“Some Notes on the Fading Tradition of America’s Founding and Preservation” by Alan Miner

Previously in my paper on the Pilgrims and the First Thanksgiving, I noted that it took the Revolutionary War and the Civil War to bring the country to its knees in thankfulness to God for the blessings we enjoy. It was at these times that a Day of Thanksgiving was declared by Washington and Lincoln. With this in mind it is also worthy of note that our National Anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner,” was penned by Francis Scott Key during another war—the War of 1812—when the United States was about to lose the war but was miraculously preserved.

Words of thankfulness are found in the last verse:

O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand  
Between their loved home and the war's desolation.  
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Unfortunately this verse is now hardly ever sung by the citizens of this country in a public setting. I even suppose that now many schools would not even allow it to be sung because it refers to “God” -- “the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation”--by implication the Christian or biblical God.

Another insight into where we are as a nation comes from a recent incident related to Franklin D. Roosevelt's World War II - D-Day Prayer.

Not long ago the United States Congress considered a bill introduced in 2013 that would add a prayer given by former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. Called the "World War II Memorial Prayer Act of 2013", the proposed bill was introduced by Republican Representative Bill Johnson of Ohio. The prayer that H.R. 2175 sought to have added to the World War II memorial was officially given by Roosevelt on the morning of the Normandy invasion, June 6, 1944, a crucial turning point in the Second World War. Roosevelt asked the nation to join him in prayer as U.S. and allied troops launched the invasion that led to the defeat of Nazi Germany. He asked God to give the allied troops courage and faith, saying, "With thy blessing we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy." This prayer was heard by many around the world who were listening by radio as the events in Normandy were unfolding. The lives of millions were in the balance, depending on the success of the Allies' advance, and the hope and prayer of many was expressed in President Roosevelt's prayer. What follows is his prayer:

My Fellow Americans:

Last night, when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our Allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.

And so, in this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer:

Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith.

They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. For the enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces. Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again; and we know that by Thy grace, and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph.

They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest -- until the victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men's souls will be shaken with the violences of war.

For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate. They fight to let justice arise, and tolerance and goodwill among all Thy people. They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home.

Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom.

And for us at home -- fathers, mothers, children, wives, sisters, and brothers of brave men overseas, whose thoughts and prayers are ever with them -- help us, Almighty God, to rededicate ourselves in renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice.

**Many people have urged that I call the nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts.**

Give us strength, too -- strength in our daily tasks, to redouble the contributions we make in the physical and the material support of our armed forces.

And let our hearts be stout, to wait out the long travail, to bear sorrows that may come, to impart our courage unto our sons wheresoever they may be.

And, O Lord, give us faith. Give us faith in Thee; faith in our sons; faith in each other; faith in our united crusade. Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impacts of temporary events, of temporal matters of but fleeting moment -- let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose.

With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogances. Lead us to the saving of our country, and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace -- a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all of men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil.

Thy will be done, Almighty God.

Amen.

The "World War II Memorial Prayer Act of 2013" passed the House of Representatives only to stall in the Senate. The Obama administration announced its objection to adding President Franklin Roosevelt's D-Day prayer to the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Assorted liberal groups believed adding the prayer would go against the principles of religious diversity in the United States. Simon Brown of Americans United for Separation of Church and State wrote that the bill "disrespects America's religious diversity." "American veterans - like those currently in the armed forces - come from many different religious traditions and some follow no spiritual path at all. Slapping a prayer onto a memorial that

honors all those veterans would be an insult to both their service and their sacrifice," wrote Brown. "The current memorial represents all 16 million people who served in our armed forces during World War II. It doesn't need to be altered to serve some partisan political agenda or the theocratic goals of the Religious Right."

Johnson said. "President Roosevelt's prayer gave solace, comfort and strength to our nation and our brave warriors as we fought against tyranny and oppression." "It is unconscionable that the Obama administration would stand in the way of honoring our nation's distinguished World War II veterans,"

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council said , "This is further evidence that the administration has created an environment that is hostile towards American history -- in particular towards Christianity." Perkins added, "I hope America wakes up and realizes what this administration is doing to this country and how they want to radically and fundamentally change America." "They want to erase every aspect of America's heritage," Perkins said of Obama's administration. " . . . Christianity, is no longer welcome in this administration. That's the environment they are creating."

Note\* The 9/11 National Day of Prayer & Remembrance speech by George W. Bush:

On Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked America in a series of despicable acts of war. They hijacked four passenger jets, crashed two of them into the World Trade Centre's twin towers and a third into the Headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense at the Pentagon, causing great loss of life and tremendous damage. The fourth plane crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside, killing all on board but falling well short of its intended target apparently because of the heroic efforts of passengers on board. This carnage, which caused the collapse of both Trade Centre towers and the destruction of part of the Pentagon, killed more than 250 airplane passengers and thousands more on the ground. . . .

Scripture says: "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." I call on every American family and the family of America to observe a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, honouring the memory of the thousands of victims of these brutal attacks and comforting those who lost loved ones. We will persevere through this national tragedy and personal loss. In time, we will find healing and recovery; and, in the face of all this evil, we remain strong and united, "one Nation under God."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Friday, September 14, 2001, as a National Day of Prayer and

Remembrance for the Victims of the Terrorist Attacks on September 11, 2001. I ask that the people of the United States and places of worship mark this National Day of Prayer and Remembrance with noontime memorial services, the ringing of bells at that hour, and evening candlelight remembrance vigils. . . . I invite the people of the world who share our grief to join us in these solemn observances.

### Obama's War on Religion within the Military.

In 2013, Congressman Tim Huelskamp wrote the following:

President Obama is a wartime Commander-in-Chief. No, I don't mean the obvious (Iraq or Afghanistan). . . . Given President Obama's notorious contempt for Americans who "cling to their Bibles" and "guns," perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by his Administration's hostility to service members who espouse traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs.

The persecution of Christians and conservatives has become increasingly brazen and pervasive since the President took office four and half years ago. To "protect patients" from proselytizing or prayer, Walter Reed Army Medical Center banned wounded warriors' family members from "bringing or using Bibles" during visits. The Department of Veterans Affairs barred Christian prayers at a National Cemetery. . . . A war games scenario at Ft. Leavenworth identified evangelical Christian groups as a national security threat.

A field grade officer listed the American Family Association and Family Research Council [conservative religious groups] as "domestic hate groups" and directed his subordinate officers to monitor soldiers who might be supporters. Evangelist Franklin Graham was un-invited from the Pentagon's National Day of Prayer service. A training exercise funded by the Department of Homeland Security portrayed home-schooling families as the domestic terrorists.

An Air Force officer was required to hide from view the Bible he once kept on top of his desk. An Air Force chaplain's video tribute to sergeants was banned for fear it would offend an "agnostic, atheist, or Muslim." The chaplain's video narration said: "On the eighth day, God looked down on His creation and said, 'I need someone who will take care of the Airmen.' So God created a First Sergeant."

Coast Guard Rear Admiral William Lee told a National Day of Prayer audience that Christian service members are being told to hide their faith and religious liberty is being threatened by Pentagon lawyers. Army Reserve training materials listed Evangelical

Christianity, Catholicism, and Orthodox Judaism as extremist religious groups alongside Al-Qaeda and Hamas. . . .

In April, several Generals consulted Mikey Weinstein – the anti-Christian zealot dedicated to attacking men and women of any faith — to solicit his help writing Air Force policies concerning “religious tolerance.” . . . Mr. Weinstein is a man who says the military ranks are full of “Christian fundamentalist monsters” whose evangelizing constitutes “spiritual rape,” “a national security threat,” and “sedition and treason.” After Weinstein telephoned the Pentagon to complain about a painting displayed at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho, it was removed less than one hour later. The painting bore the word “Integrity” and the citation “Matthew 5:9” (the verse says: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God”).

Mr. Weinstein bragged to The Washington Post that the Defense Department expressed its willingness to ban proselytizing (i.e., evangelizing, sharing one’s faith, or spreading the Gospel) and added, “We need half a dozen court-martials real quick.” Days later, the Pentagon issued a statement to the news media that announced: “Religious proselytization is not permitted within the Department of Defense.” . . .

These revelations highlight the fact that Obama’s war on God-fearing servicemen is not only morally repugnant, but also threatens the long-term soundness of our voluntary military. . . .

Note\* It is sad to observe just how far we have strayed from the religious foundations upon which this country was built and preserved.

[Alan Miner, “Some Notes on the Fading Tradition of America’s Founding and Preservation” ]

#### 1 Nephi 13:23 **It Proceedeth out of the Mouth of a Jew:**

According to Cleon Skousen, in 1 Nephi 13:23 the angel seems to be referring primarily to the Old Testament (he gets to the New Testament in verse 24). The statement of the angel that the Old Testament came forth from “a” Jew is highly significant. This undoubtedly refers to the famous Jewish scribe, Ezra, who was the compiler of the Old Testament record which we use in modern times. Ezra was not a prophet but a priest and a scholarly scribe who lived in Babylon. Nearly a century before his time, the Jews had returned to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. and rebuilt the temple of Solomon which was dedicated in 516 B.C. In spite of this, however, Ezra heard that they were not obeying the commandments of God but were desecrating the sacred temple rites with their impure lives. He therefore went to Jerusalem to start a massive reform

movement. Once he arrived in Jerusalem, however, Ezra discovered the Jews had lost practically all of their scriptures. It will be recalled that in ancient times the scriptures were maintained as separate books, and one by one these had become lost. Ezra therefore gathered together all of the prophetic writings which he had brought with him as well as those he was able to find in Jerusalem, and compiled them into a single canon of scripture which became our Old Testament. It is estimated that Ezra did most of this work between approximately 450-400 B.C. This allowed him to include the writings of Malachi who lived during the latter part of this period. The Jews then went into 400 years of dark ages so Malachi is the last prophet cited in the Old Testament. In view of these known historical facts it is literally true that the existence of our present Old Testament scripture is the direct result of the careful compilation made by Ezra, and it was entirely accurate for the angel to say that this book proceeded from the mouth of "a" Jew.

[W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1106] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:11: 5:18]

#### **1 Nephi 13:23 It Proceedeth out of the Mouth of a Jew:**

According to George Reynolds and Janne Sjodahl, the prophet here in 1 Nephi 13:23 is speaking on the Old Testament, as it was to appear through the labors of Ezra and his associates and successors. Ezra undertook the work of collecting all the sacred writings that existed at his time. This work included not only the discovery of copies in various places, the rejection of those that were not authentic and the copying of manuscripts the contents of which could not otherwise be secured, but also the correction of the text, after careful examination of the variations that must have been found. It was this work that was shown to Nephi in his vision of the Old Testament, and therefore, he, very properly, says he beheld it coming "out of the mouth of a Jew" (1 Nephi 13:23).

[George Reynolds and Janne Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, p. 262]

#### **1 Nephi 13:23 It Is a Record Like . . . the Plates of Brass, Save There Are Not So Many . . . :**

The brass plates of Laban contained many prophecies not contained in the Old Testament. Here Nephi directly compares the size of the brass plates record to our Old Testament record and he states that the brass plates were larger. This means there must have been a lot of records contained in that work that we do not have now, probably much more than the three additional prophets that Nephi mentions: Zenos, Zenock, and Neum (1 Ne 19:10).

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

Note\* In our present Old Testament the books up to and including the Book of Jeremiah cover 1026 pages. The Book of Mormon text is covered in about 520 pages. The Brass Plates were apparently NOT written in a "shorthand" form of "Reformed Egyptian" as the Gold Plates were.



Thus the amount of plates in the Brass Plates would have apparently been substantial. Was there perhaps more than just one set of brass plates that Nephi carried away? [Alan Miner Personal Notes]

#### 1 Nephi 13:24 **The Book Proceeded Forth from the Mouth of a Jew:**

According to Robert Parsons, if we accept this meaning of the phrase, "the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew" (1 Nephi 13:24), we would have to accept the idea that Ezra's collection of writings more nearly approached what was in the brass plates than the writings now contained in our Old Testament, since the angel also told Nephi that the book contained the fulness of the gospel. The fulness of the gospel of necessity would include a correct understanding of the creation, the fall, the atonement, and the principles of faith, repentance, baptism, and the Holy Ghost. All of these are essential for one to enter the celestial kingdom, and the fulness of the gospel prepares and qualifies one to enter that kingdom. Since the Pearl of Great Price and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible make it abundantly clear that much has been lost from the Old Testament, and since our King James Version of the Bible agrees to a great extent with the Dead Sea Scrolls, it seems apparent that many Old Testament losses occurred before the time of Christ. However, since Paul seems familiar with the Tame and Wild Olive Tree allegory (Romans 11:17), and since Jude refers to writings in the book of Enoch (Jude 1:14), perhaps losses after the time of Christ also occurred. Elder Mark E. Petersen wrote: "When Nephi spoke of the 'plain and precious' parts of the scripture which were eliminated he spoke of the witness of Christ which is no longer in the Old Testament."<sup>lxxxix</sup>

In light of all we know today, perhaps a better interpretation of "the book [that] proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew" would be to identify it as the Bible, which came from the mouth of Jesus and also the mouths of many Jews. This would be consistent with 1 Nephi 13:24, which states that the book contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bore record, and verse 25, which states that "these things [the book] go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles." However, a distinction should probably be made between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Greek Septuagint translation (around 250 B.C.) and the Dead Sea Scroll Old Testament manuscripts (around 200 B.C. to A.D. 70) were already corrupted before the New Testament was written. The New Testament was pure at first but was later corrupted. Thus, there never was a time in which both the Old Testament and the New Testament were uncorrupted at the same time, though the component parts of each of the testaments were pure when they "came from the pen of the original writers." [Robert E. Parsons, "The Great and Abominable Church," in Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon, Part 1, pp. 48-51]

#### 1 Nephi 13:26 **They Have Taken Away . . . Many Parts Which Are Plain and Most Precious:**

The ministry of Joseph Smith fortunately replaced many, but not all, of the plain and precious parts of the Bible which were taken away. His retranslation of the Bible restored great truths, especially about the events written in Genesis. This is seen in the entire book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, especially chapter 50.

The historical events surrounding the creation of the New Testament record are poorly recorded. No single person or group has been attributed with the compilation of the Bible as we know it and the year that it was put together is still in dispute. Therefore, external evidence corroborating Nephi's claim is lacking. This in no way takes away from the truthfulness of his statement. There is evidence, however, that epistles of early church leaders were evaluated at different times and judgments were made as to whether they should be included as canon or not. Some of these works were probably spurious, but others were probably inspired. The historical record is complete enough to list some of these works and the confusion which at times prevailed over what records should be included in the New Testament. A historian of the 18th century named Mosheim recorded:

"As to the time when and the persons by whom, the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume, there are various opinions, or rather conjectures, of the learned; for the subject is attended with great and almost inexplicable difficulties to us of these latter times. It must suffice to know, that before the middle of the second century, most of the books composing the New Testament were in every Christian Church throughout the known world, and were read and regarded as the divine rule of faith and practice.

"...Not long after the Saviour's ascension, various histories of his life and doctrines full of impositions and fables were composed by persons of no bad intentions perhaps, but who were superstitious, simple, and addicted to pious frauds; and afterwards various spurious writings were palmed upon the world, inscribed with the names of the holy apostles. These worthless productions would have wrought great confusion, and would have rendered both the history and the religion of Christ uncertain, had not the rulers of churches seasonably interposed, and caused the books which were truly divine and which came from apostolic hands, to be speedily separated from that mass of trash into a volume by themselves." (Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, 6th ed., 1868, pp. 36-39)

In light of Nephi's statement, one can't help but wonder if the works which are referred to by Mosheim as "spurious writings...worthless productions...mass of trash" weren't in actuality, "plain and precious." Here we see evidence that the "rulers of churches" interceded to decide what should be included and what should be excluded. Mosheim next chronicles a series of these other works which were excluded. They include the works of Clement, a bishop at Antioch and companion of the early elders of the church, the Epistle of Polycarp, who had direct contact with John, the Revelator, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and many others.

James E. Talmage recorded the importance of councils held later to determine what should be included as canon:

“In addition to individual testimony we have that of ecclesiastical councils and official bodies, by whom the question of authenticity [of the books of the New Testament] was tried and decided. In this connection may be mentioned the Council of Nice, 325 A.D.; the Council of Laodicea, 363 A.D.; the Council of Hippo, 393 A.D.; the third and the sixth Councils of Carthage, 397 and 419 A.D.

“Since the date last named, no dispute as to the authenticity of the New Testament has claimed much attention. The present is too late a time and the separating distance too vast to encourage the reopening of the question. The New Testament must be accepted for what it claims to be; and though, perhaps, many precious parts have been suppressed or lost, while some corruptions of the texts may have crept in, and errors have been inadvertently introduced through the incapacity of translators, the volume as a whole must be admitted as authentic and credible, and as an essential part of the Holy Scriptures.” (A Study of the Articles of Faith, James E. Talmage, p. 248)

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

**1 Nephi 13:26 They Have Taken Away from the Gospel . . . Many Parts Which Are Plain and Most Precious:**

In prophesying of the coming forth of the Bible, Nephi says concerning the contents of the book that "they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious" (1 Nephi 13:26). McConkie and Millet address the question, "What are some examples of these plain and precious matters which have been expurgated from the original biblical records?" May we not ask what became of such matters in the Old Testament as the identity of Jesus Christ as Jehovah, the ordinances of salvation (baptism, confirmation, sealings, and eternal marriages), the age of accountability, the premortal existence of man, the nature and functions of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the typology of the Law of Moses, and particulars concerning such doctrines as the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement? These and a myriad of others--including such issues in the New Testament as the timeless nature of the Atonement (retroactive and proactive), the doctrine of celestial marriage, and a distinction between the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the signs of the times incident to the Second Coming -- were lost to the world until the "times of restitution" began in the spring of 1820.

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 98] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 9:13; Jarom 1:2]

According to Clay Gorton, the books of the following prophets are mentioned but not included in the Bible: the book of Jasher (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18); the book of Gad the seer, (1 Chronicles 29:29); the book of Nathan the prophet (2 Chronicles 9:29); the book of

Shemaiah the prophet (2 Chronicles 12:15); a writing from Elijah the prophet (2 Chronicles 21:12); the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah (Isaiah 38:9).

[H. Clay Gorton, The Legacy of the Brass Plates of Laban, p. 17]

### 1 Nephi 13:26 **They Have Taken Away from the Gospel of the Lamb Many Parts:**

According to John Welch, in 1 Nephi 13, Nephi explained in some detail how the apostasy from early Christianity would occur. First Nephi 13:24-32 seems to identify *three* stages in this process--not just one.

1. This stage would have occurred simply by altering the *meaning* of the things taught by the Lord without necessarily changing the words themselves.

2. The Gentiles would next take away "many covenants of the Lord" (1 Nephi 13:26). We can note that this step, too could be taken without deleting any words from the Bible as such. The knowledge and benefit of the covenants of God can be lost simply by neglecting the performance of ordinances, priesthood functions, or individual covenants.

3. Nephi understood this step as a consequence of the first two, for 1 Nephi 13:28 begins with the word "wherefore." Thus, things that were lost from the texts of the Bible were not necessarily a cause, but a result of the fact that, first, the gospel, and second, the covenants of the Lord had been lost or taken away.

Understanding this process helps us to see how the Book of Mormon corrects this situation. It Contains the fulness of the gospel (see D&C 20:9).

[John W. Welch, The Sermon at the Temple, and The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 88-89]

### 1 Nephi 13:28 **There Are Many Plain and Precious Things Taken Away from the Book:**

Nephi sees in vision that "after the book [of the Lamb of God] hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book" (1 Nephi 13:18). While acknowledging the possible deletions and variations that might have entered into the book itself, Reynolds and Sjodahl bring up another perspective, which is the loss of numerous supportive texts that may have provided additional insight and testimony to this book.

People have a wrong idea of the civilization of the early ages. They are apt to think of the people as ignorant, unable to read and write. But not so. . . . Books were numerous. In the famous Alexandrian library, there were at one time circa 700,000 volumes. During the siege of the city by Julius Caesar, part of the library was destroyed by fire,

but the loss was somewhat repaired by the turning over of the collection at Pergamos to Cleopatra by Mark Anthony. It remained for the so-called Christian Roman emperor, Theodosius the Great, to destroy that precious collection of literature, in the interest of the church, in the year A.D. 389. Similar acts of vandalism have occurred again and again. Precious books were given to the flames. The same policy was resurrected in America by the first Spanish missionaries who made bonfires of the literature of the Mayas. The vision of Nephi was fulfilled literally.

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 129]

**1 Nephi 13:28 There Are Many Plain and Precious Things Taken Away from the Book, Which Is the Book of the Lamb of God:**

In Nephi's vision (1 Nephi 13) he beheld that when the record of the Jews, which contained the covenants of the Lord, which he had made with the house of Israel, proceeded forth, it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord (vv. 23-24). However, after being subjected to the great and abominable church, the book of the Lamb of God would have "many plain and precious things taken away" (1 Nephi 13:28). According to Joy Osborn, it is not known what scriptures and beliefs the house of Israel may have taken with them as they were taken into captivity by the Assyrians, then disappeared into the north; but we do know that the Jews, whom the Lord through the prophet Ezekiel declared to be even more wicked than Ephraim and Samaria, had begun a serious effort to remove all scriptural references to the coming of Christ as the sacrificial Lamb who would die for their sins. Hugh Nibley writes:

One of the first, and certainly the greatest, of Christian Apologists was Justin Martyr. In his famous dialogue with the Jew Trypha, he charges "the teachers and the leaders of the Jews with having deliberately defaced and, where possible, removed from the scripture every trace of the true Messianic Gospel which the Jews themselves had once taught." (Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, p. 312)

Justin Martyr had accused the Jewish doctors of "removing passages which they found distasteful" from the scriptures. Martyr declared: "You know very well that your teachers whenever they detect anything in our scriptures that might refer to Christ, diligently efface it." (Dial. 120)

[Joy M. Osborn, The Book of Mormon -- The Stick of Joseph, p. 222]

**1 Nephi 13:28 There Are Many Plain and Precious Things Taken Away from the Book:**

Richardson, Richardson and Bentley write that several Bible scholars have concluded that there are many passages of scripture that were deleted from the canonical Bible in use today. Adam Clarke quoted Justin Martyr, an early Christian writer who taught that a certain

passage had been taken out of the Book of Ezra:

And Ezra said to the people; This Passover is our Savior and our Refuge: and if ye will be persuaded of it, and let it enter into your hearts, that we are to humble ourselves to him in a sign, and afterwards shall believe in him, this place shall not be destroyed forever, saith the Lord of Hosts: But if ye will not believe in him, nor hearken to his preaching, ye shall be a laughing-stock to the gentiles. . . .

This passage," Justin says, "the Jews, through their enmity to Christ, blotted out of the book of Ezra. He charges them with canceling several other places through the same spirit of enmity and opposition."<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Also in "Dialogue with Trypho," Justin Martyr writes: "And since this passage from the sayings of Jeremiah is still written in some copies (of the Scriptures) in the synagogues of the Jews (for it was only a short time since they were cut out), . . . from the sayings of the same Jeremiah these have been cut out: "The Lord God remembered His dead people of Israel who lay in the graves; and He descended to preach to them His own salvation."<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The deleted text clearly makes reference to the Savior's visit to the *spirit world*, during the time that His body slept in the tomb--as recorded in Peter's first general epistle (1 Peter 3:18-20; 4:5-6).

[Allen H. Richardson, David E. Richardson and Anthony E. Bentley, 1000 Evidences for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Part Two-A Voice from the Dust: 500 Evidences in Support of the Book of Mormon, p. 18]

#### 1 Nephi 13:28 **There Are Many Plain and Precious Things Taken Away from the Book:**

Richardson, Richardson and Bentley write that while the Book of Mormon testifies to the authenticity of the Bible, it does not claim that the Bible is without error. It specifically states that there were many "plain and precious things" that were deleted from its pages through the evil works of men. (See 1 Nephi 13:20-32; 19:10-12; 20:1-3; 2 Nephi 3:5-22; Alma 33:3, 13, 15; 34:7; 46:23-27; Helaman 8:19-20; 15:11; 3 Nephi 10:14-17; 12:13, 17-19, 22, 29-30; 14:1.)

Scholars of the Bible have found indisputable evidence that the Bible has indeed suffered many deletions.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Non Mormon scholarship has concluded that the gospels found in the New Testament have also been manipulated.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Critics often ask for specific examples of any "plain and precious things" found in the Book of Mormon that are not also found in the Bible. Below is just a very brief list of such examples:

The Lord prepares a way for us to keep all of His commandments (1 Nephi 3:7)

How mysteries are made known unto man (1 Nephi 10:19; Mosiah 2:9; Alma 12:10; 26:22)

The process for receiving revelation and inspiration (1 Nephi 17:45; Enos 1:10)

The gentiles to assist the house of Israel (1 Nephi 22:8-11; 2 Nephi 10:18)

The law of consecration (2 Nephi 2:2)

The reason God allows evil and opposition to continue in the world and the importance of moral agency (2 Nephi 2:2, 10:16)

The purpose of Adam's fall & man's existence (2 Nephi 2:22-25)

The lost prophecy of the latter-day Joseph (2 Nephi 3:6-16)

God's word is not limited to the Bible (2 Nephi 29:3-13)

The lost teachings of Zenos (Jacob 5:1-77)

A description of the natural man, and how to overcome (Mosiah 3:19; Alma 5:6-45)

How to retain the remission of sins (Mosiah 4:11-16)

The true process of being born again (Mosiah 5:2-9; Alma 5:6-45)

The office and calling of a seer (Mosiah 8:13-17)

The manner in which faith is developed and maintained (Alma 32:26-34)

The relationship between justice and mercy (Alma 34:15-16)

The state of the soul between death and the resurrection (Alma 40:11-14)

Christians and Christianity flourished before the time of Christ (Alma 46:13-16)

The symbolisms of the remnant of Joseph's coat (Alma 46:23)

The perpetual cycle of the human experience: obedience--> blessings--> prosperity--> pride--> sin--> punishment--> humility--> repentance--> obedience . . . (Helaman 12:1-3)

The "other sheep" spoken of in John 10:16 are identified (3 Nephi 15:16-24)

The powers of translated beings (3 Nephi 28:36-40)

Baptism is only for those who are accountable (Moroni 8:5-23)

The manner in which all truth may be verified (Moroni 10:4-5)

[Allen H. Richardson, David E. Richardson and Anthony E. Bentley, 1000 Evidences for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Part Two-A Voice from the Dust: 500 Evidences in Support of the Book of Mormon, pp. 16-17] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 29:3]

### 1 Nephi 13:28 **There Are Many Plain and Precious Things Taken Away from the Book:**

According to Barry Bickmore, aside from the differences of opinion about which books should be canonical, it appears that certain parts of the canonical books have been removed by Jews and Christians alike! Justin Martyr accused the Jews of having removed certain passages from the Old Testament related to the Christian message [of salvation for the dead]. Justin quotes some passages which the Jews evidently removed from Esdras and Jeremiah and then declares:

"And again, from the sayings of the same Jeremiah these have been cut out: 'The Lord God remembered His dead people of Israel who lay in the graves; and He descended to

preach to them His own salvation.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

Irenaeus also gives witness to this reading:

And in Jeremias He thus announces His death and descent into hell, in the words: "And the Lord the Holy One of Israel bethought Him of His dead, who in the past had slept in the dust of the earth, and went down unto them, to bring the good news of salvation, to deliver them." Here He also gives the reason for His death; for His descent into hell was salvation for the departed.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

Heneri Daniel-Rops quotes Origen saying that even the New Testament texts of his time (early third century) had been corrupted extensively:

"Today the fact is evident, that there are many differences in the manuscripts, either through the negligence of certain copyists, or the perverse audacity of some in correcting the text."<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

Sadly, this habit of "correcting the text" seems to have been quite common in antiquity. Bishop Dionysius of Corinth (A.D. 110-180) complained that "the devil's Apostles" had not only tampered with the scriptures, but his own writings:

"It is, therefore not to be wondered at if some have attempted to adulterate the Lord's writings also, since they have formed designs even against writings which are of less accounts."<sup>lxxxix</sup>

[Barry Robert Bickmore, Restoring the Ancient Church: Joseph Smith & Early Christianity, pp. 60-61]

### 1 Nephi 13:28 **There Are Many Plain and Precious Things Taken Away from the Book:**

Daniel Bachman cites the specific example of John 3:16 ("he gave his only begotten Son") to give the student some idea of how "plain and precious things" can be "taken away" from the Bible. He notes that many modern versions have changed this portion of the verse and removed the word "begotten" thereby removing the literal nature of Christ's Sonhood. Here is how seven modern versions translate the phrase:

<i>Living Bible:</i>	"he gave his only Son. . ."
<i>Today's English Version:</i>	"he gave his only Son"
<i>NIV:</i>	"he gave his one and only Son"
<i>Phillips Modern English:</i>	"he gave his only Son"
<i>RSV</i>	"he gave his only Son"
<i>Jerusalem Bible:</i>	"he gave his only son"
<i>New English Bible:</i>	"he gave his only Son"



We find that when the word "begotten" is left out, the resulting phrase, "he gave his *only* son," essentially counters the truth that all men are literal spirit sons of God (Jesus being the only begotten son in the flesh).

[Daniel W. Bachman, "Commentary on John 3," unpublished paper]

#### 1 Nephi 13:29 (Chiastic Parallelism):

According to Donald Parry, parallelism is universally recognized as the characteristic feature of biblical Hebrew poetry. (p. i)

Apparently, **the prophets and writers of the scriptures employed the inverted parallel structure of parallel lines for the purpose of reinforcing their teachings and doctrines.** (p. x)

An "inverted parallelism takes the form A-B-C/C-B-A. (p. xxxii)

[In my view the chiastic structure can be the most forceful of parallels because all the lines of thought are focused on the center line, making that statement very significant.

A fine example of this Inverted Parallelism (Chiastic Structure) is found in 1 Nephi 13:29-30:

29 . . . thou hast seen with

(A) the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—

(B) because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book

(C) which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men,

(C) according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—

(B) because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of The Lamb,  
an exceedingly great many do stumble,  
yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.

30 (A) Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity,

[Donald W. Parry, The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns, F.A.R.M.S., p. 22 ]

#### 1 Nephi 13:30 **The Gentiles Who Have . . . Been Lifted up . . . above All Other Nations, upon the Face of the Land Which Is Choice above All Other Lands:**

The Book of Mormon prophesied that the land of America would become a land "choice above all other lands" (1 Nephi 2:20; 13:30; Ether 2:7). It also foretells that the American Gentiles would become the most powerful people on the face of the earth: "unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles, *which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty **above all***" (3 Nephi 20:27).

Richardson, Richardson and Bentley write that in 1830 when this prediction was first published, it must have sounded quite ludicrous, for this nation had scarcely begun its great experiment with democracy--and could hardly be considered a world power. Today, however, few can dispute the literal fulfillment of this bold prophecy. Not only does America dominate the world economy, and have the largest and best equipped military in the world, but it is also "choice above all other lands" in that it yields the more farm product exports than any other country in the world. It accomplishes this with a work force of only three-percent of the U.S. population. America's farmers are the most productive on earth--with the average farmer producing enough food for 78 people, and creating an annual value of 136 billion dollars (in 1980). The United States also leads all nations in mineral production and in manufacturing which produced about \$140 billion and \$1.85 trillion per year respectively in 1980.<sup>xc</sup>

The United States became a choice land in a political sense in that it leads the world in protection of human rights as enumerated in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution of the United States*. People from all over the world are trying desperately to immigrate to the United States, and participate in this grand experiment in democracy and personal freedom. [Allen H. Richardson, David E. Richardson and Anthony E. Bentley, 1000 Evidences for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Part Two-A Voice from the Dust: 500 Evidences in Support of the Book of Mormon, pp. 97-98]

### 1 Nephi 13:30 **The Mixture of Thy Seed, Which Are Among Thy Brethren:**

The context of verse 30 is that the Americans would not utterly destroy the native American Indians, described by Nephi as the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren. But how could Nephi's seed be alive in the 18th & 19th centuries?

The simplified version of history records that the Lamanites killed the Nephites in about 385 AD. However, the Book of Mormon record states that there were Lamanites among the Nephites and Nephites among the Lamanites. These had chosen their allegiance based on religious and political lines and not racial lines. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the promise was given to Nephi that some of his seed would be preserved even after the final destruction of the Nephites. This means that some Nephites who had defected to the Lamanite side would merge with Lamanite society (see Alma 45:13) and the blood of Nephi would be preserved.

Mormon records that some Nephites had been mixed with the Lamanites, And they (the records) have been handed down from one generation to another by the Nephites, even until they have fallen into transgression and have been murdered plundered, and hunted, and driven forth, and slain, and scattered upon the face of the earth, and mixed with the Lamanites until they are no more called the Nephites, becoming wicked, and wild, and ferocious, yea, even becoming Lamanites (Hel 3:16). Moroni's statement that after the final great battle that the

Lamanites put to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ (Mor 1:2) implies that there were Nephites who preserved their lives by denying the Christ and joined the Lamanite society.

[\[josephsmith.com.1nephi\]](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)

**1 Nephi 13:37 Blessed Are They Who Shall Seek To Bring Forth Zion At That Day . . . How Beautiful upon the Mountains Shall They Be:**

This passage has reference to the prophecy of Isaiah found in Isa 52:7, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace. Nephi was referring to those who would bring forth the kingdom of God in the latter days. Few would doubt that men like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Hyrum Smith, Parley P. Pratt, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Oliver Cowdery, and a hundred others were foreordained to the great work of the Restoration. Sometimes, we underestimate the importance of an event because of our proximity to it. The Restoration of priesthood keys, saving ordinances, and temple worship is the key to saving the entire earth from destruction. This destruction would come with the Second Coming of the Lord. Joseph Smith was told what would happen without the Restoration, if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming (JS-H 1:39).

[\[josephsmith.com.1nephi\]](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)

**1 Nephi 13:37 Blessed Are They Who Shall Seek to Bring Forth My Zion at That Day:**

Benito Pablo Juarez was born to Zapotec Indian parents in the year 1806, making him a contemporary of Joseph Smith. When Benito was only three years old, both of his parents died. His grandparents watched over him until the age of 13, but then they died also. Benito's life looked bleak, but just as the Lord had watched over an Israelite shepherd boy named David, and had watched over the boy Joseph who was taken away from his parents and sold into Egypt, and had watched over the poor backwoods boy named Abraham Lincoln; so the Lord would watch over Benito. After herding sheep for his uncle for a time, Benito wandered into the big City of Oaxaca, in the mountains of south central Mexico. His sister happened to be serving as a maid for a wealthy Spaniard, and through some providential circumstances, Benito came to be adopted by this family.

Benito proved to be extremely bright, and was schooled in the traditional Catholic society of the priesthood. He manifested a desire to practice law and graduated from the University of Oaxaca with a law degree. For the next 12 years, Benito Juarez practiced law in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico and became a champion for justice. His integrity and concern for

the poor became almost legendary. In 1847, as the Mormon pioneers moved west to Utah, Benito became the governor of Oaxaca, Mexico, and made the state a model of justice and organization. He reportedly was so organized that the people could set their clocks according to his schedule for going to work. Governor Juarez developed a strong love for democracy, but in so doing brought upon himself the ire of the establishment. He was exiled by the Mexican President Santa Ana in 1853, and spent two years in the United States.

Benito Juarez returned to Mexico as minister of justice, and in 1857 he drafted the reform laws that brought about the disenfranchisement of the Catholic Church. In other words, he brought about the separation of the church and the government. The results of those laws were felt by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as Juarez's work opened the door for missionary work in Mexico. In reality, Benito Juarez' work meant the fulfillment of prophecy which the prophet Nephi recorded nearly 2500 years before:

. . . in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief yea, for the space of many years, and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed . . . (1 Nephi 15:13)  
[Joseph L. Allen, Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon, pp. 93-95]

Note\* Most Latter-day saints are acquainted with the account of Wilford Woodruff where in vision he was visited by the founding fathers of America:

The spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, "You have had the use of the Endowment House for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy . . . and were faithful to God." These were the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and they waited on me for two days and two nights. I thought it very singular, that notwithstanding so much work had been done . . . nothing had been done for them. . . . Heretofore our minds were reaching after our more immediate friends and relatives. (Wilford Woodruff, September 16, 1877, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:229)

Because of this vision, Wilford Woodruff visited the St. George temple on August 21, 1877, and was baptized by John D.T. McAllister for one hundred prominent men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (See Richard O. Cowan, *Temples to Dot the Earth*, pp. 79-80).

Members of the Church from the United States of America take great pride in the list of names for which temple work was completed by President Woodruff: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, the signers of the Declaration of Independence, etc. However, unknown and unnoticed to most of these members is a name at the bottom of the

list, a name easily recognized by the members of the Church from Mexico, the name of a poor little orphaned Zapotec Indian boy who grew to become a tool in the Lord's hand--Benito Juarez. "And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be" (1 Nephi 13:37). [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]



1 Nephi 13:37 **Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day (Illustration):** That We May Be Redeemed. Artist: Harold I. Hopkinson. In August 1877, the Founding fathers of the United States appeared to Wilford Woodruff in the St. George Temple, asking that their temple work be done. President Woodruff reports that he "straightway went into the baptismal font and called upon Brother McAllister to baptize me for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and fifty other eminent men." [L.D.S., The Ensign, September 1988, inside front cover]



1 Nephi 13:37 **Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day (Illustration):** Benito Juarez (1806-1872). Drawing by Cliff Dunston. [Joseph L. Allen, Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon, p. 95]

1 Nephi 13:37 **Zion:**

According to McConkie and Millet, in the Book of Mormon we encounter what the world would consider to be an unusual form and meaning for the word *zion*. In an Old Testament setting, Zion usually has reference to the holy mount or, by extension, to the city of Jerusalem. Here in 1 Nephi 13:37 and in numerous other places (e.g., 2 Nephi 26:29-31; 28:20-21,24; 3 Nephi 16:16-18) Zion seems to represent the gathering place of the believers, the society of the pure in heart, the setting for the Saints.

Thus, once again we find that explanations for the origin and integration of the concepts in the Book of Mormon are not simple tasks, especially for the doubters of the world. [Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 103]

1 Nephi 13:39 **I [Nephi] Beheld Other Books, Which Came Forth by the Power of the Lamb:**

Nephi wrote of his vision of the future: "I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true" (1 Nephi 13:39) A number of other Book of Mormon passages speak of the coming forth of ancient records in the last days (see 1 Nephi 14:25-26; 2 Nephi 27:10, 21-22; 30:3; Ether 3:27).

According to John Tvedtnes, when Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, the concept of ancient records hidden away for future generations was foreign to Christians, who believed that the Bible was the most ancient of books and the most authoritative records from antiquity. All that was to change over the next century and a half, as new discoveries were made. The largest collections are the clay tablets known from dozens of sites in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, some of which date to the third millennium B.C. The number of known tablets is in the tens of thousands, while untold numbers lie beneath the earth waiting to be discovered. Biblical and other documents have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls and at nearby sites such as Masada, Nahal, Hever, Nahal Se'elim, Wadi Murabba'at, Khirbet Mird, and Wadi Daliyah. Other interesting collections of documents have been found in Egypt, including the Bodmer and Anastasi papyri, the *Pistis Sophia* and *1 and 2 Jeu*, and, of course, the Nag Hammadi collection. As late as February 1998, Canadian archaeologists unearthed a collection of about two thousand papyrus rolls at Esment el-Kharab, near the Dakhla oasis in western Egypt.

Because ancient records were revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith (the Book of Mormon and the records of Enoch, Moses, and Abraham, plus portions of the Doctrine and Covenants), members of the Church from very early on have not only taken a keen interest in extrabiblical books, but have also helped in publishing some of them.

[John Tvedtnes, The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books: Out of Darkness unto Light, pp. 167-173]

**1 Nephi 13:40 These Last Records . . . Shall Make Known to All Kindreds, Tongues, and People:**

Nephi, the first prophet mentioned in the Book of Mormon recorded the prophetic words of an angel who declared that the Book of Mormon would be made "known to all kindreds, tongues, and people" (1 Nephi 13:40).

Richardson, Richardson and Bentley write that as of the year 2000 the Book of Mormon, including abridged editions, has been printed in 94 languages. Fifteen thousand copies of the Book are printed each day. There are now over one hundred million copies of the Book of Mormon circulating throughout the world. The Book of Mormon has been taken to so many nations for so long, that some editions have gone out of print with dying languages. (*Ensign*, May 2000, p. 112)

[Allen H. Richardson, David E. Richardson and Anthony E. Bentley, 1000 Evidences for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Part Two-A Voice from the Dust: 500 Evidences in Support of the Book of Mormon, p. 90]

**1 Nephi 13:40 These Last Records Which Thou Has Seen among the Gentiles Shall Establish the Truth of the First, Which Are of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb:**

[See the commentary on 2 Nephi 3:11; Alma 33:11; Helaman 8:17]

**1 Nephi 13:42 The Last Shall Be First and The First Shall Be Last:**

This scripture has been confusing to some but is quite simple. The “first” refers to the house of Israel; the “last” refers to the Gentiles. Christ made it clear during his ministry that he was sent only to the house of Israel. In speaking to the woman of Canaan, he said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 15:24). Although the Jews had rejected the Lord on several previous occasions (during Old Testament times), the Lord in his mercy gave them the opportunity to accept Jehovah as he ministered among them in the flesh. It was not until the Jews had called for his crucifixion, consented to his death, and cried, His blood be upon us, and upon our children (Matt 27:25) that they lost the privilege of having the gospel preached preferentially to them. Shortly thereafter, Peter saw the famous vision which opened up the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles (see Acts 10). Therefore in Christ’s day the Jews heard the gospel first and the Gentiles heard the gospel last. In the last days, the Lord would reestablish his kingdom through the Gentiles; they would be the first to hear the good word and the Jews would be last.

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**1 Ne 14:1 Stumbling Blocks:**

McConkie and Millet write:

“The stumbling blocks spoken of by the angel appeared to be of two types: (1) the ignorance and uncertainty which came as a result of the loss of the plain and precious truths from the Bible; and (2) the Book of Mormon and the message of the Restoration themselves which would serve as stumbling blocks to the impenitent and hard-hearted of the latter days. In the meridian of time Paul wrote: ‘We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness’ (1 Corinthians 1:23).”

[McConkie and Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 106]

**1 Nephi 14:2 The Gentiles Who Harden Not Their Hearts Shall Be Numbered Among the House of Israel:**



Latter-day saints who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and receive the necessary ordinances to join the kingdom of God receive the promise that they shall be numbered among the house of Israel. The significance of this statement begins with the promises made to Abraham. Because of Abraham's great faith and obedience, even that he would offer his son Isaac, the Lord promised him, That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gen 22:17-8). Those who understand the true meaning of the promise of eternal life and eternal increase understand that seed multiplied as the stars of the heaven is an eternal and not merely a mortal promise. Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, means that the Lord will bless them, prosper them, and protect them from political oppression. In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed is fulfilled in several respects. First, the house of Israel will do the genealogy and temple work for the dead and perform temple ordinances for the returning ten tribes, becoming saviors on mount Zion, And there shall they (the 10 tribes) fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim (DC 133:32). Second, the Savior of the world and most of the prophets were to come through the lineage of Israel. Third, the gospel will be brought to the world primarily through the house of Israel. Fourth, the world has been blessed by the contributions to art, science, inventions, industry, philosophy, politics, etc. made by the descendants of Abraham.

Other promises related to the covenant made with Abraham are to be had in the temple of God. John the Revelator explained that those who are sanctified by Jesus Christ are made kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:6). This phrase could be rendered kings and priests in the house of Israel for it is through the house of Israel that the Lord establishes his church and reigns in his kingdom, for now and for all time. All of these promises that are part of the Abrahamic covenant are available to every member of the church. They are promises with incredible eternal consequence which are often under appreciated.

Joseph Smith taught that there was an actual spiritual transformation which purges out the old blood, "the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 150) See also Rom 9:6-8, DC 103:17, and the Bible Dictionary on "Adoption."

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### 1 Nephi 14:2 **The House of *Israel***:

According to Chauncey Riddle, there are special code words or word usages in the Book of Mormon which are not culturally transparent to the user of ordinary English. . . . The four major kinds of hidden meanings involve: (1) obscure usages, (2) technical usages, (3) metaphorical/allegorical usages, and (4) double entendres. . . . The phrase "the house of Israel" involves a double entendre. Double entendre is where there is a plain, straight-forward and legitimate ordinary interpretation of a language usage which is underlayed by a second, more significant but abstruse meaning.

One of the most common references in the Book of Mormon is to Israel and the house of Israel. The surface meaning of the name "Israel" is that it is a reference to Jacob, the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham, and the father of the twelve tribes. A principal concern of the writers of the Book of Mormon is what had happened, what was happening, and what would happen in the future to the house of Israel, and particularly to their own family, a branch of the house of Israel. In general, Israel is important as a people in the history of the world because it is through Israel that the blessing of all nations by the seed of Abraham will be administered.

The tie to the seed of Abraham gives us a clue to the deeper, more important meaning of the name Israel. First we know that the name is a new name given to one who was a faithful servant of Jehovah. As a new name, it is given of Jehovah, or Christ, as a reward, and to signify a new relationship of the recipient to Christ. If we look at the name "Israel" etymologically, we see that it is purported to come from two roots. One of the roots means "mighty, a prince, one who rules." The other root ["el"] is the Hebrew name for God. The standard references tell us that the name Israel means "he will rule as God," or "he rules as God."

Now it is plain that he who rules or will rule as God is Jehovah, himself, or Jesus Christ. Thus, "Israel," the new name for Jacob is also a name of God himself, even as was Abram's new name (*Abraham*). The conclusion is that the house of Israel is the house or family of Jehovah, the house of Christ. The children of Israel are thus of two kinds: the seed of the flesh, the literal descendants of Jacob; and the children of the new and everlasting covenant, who are the children of men who have come unto Christ and have become his sons and daughters, his seed (see Mosiah 15:10-11 for example). [Chauncey C. Riddle, "Code Language in the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S., pp. 1-2, 16-18] [See the commentary on the name *Abraham* -- 1 Nephi 22:9; see also the commentary on the name *Jesus* -- 2 Nephi 25:19]

### 1 Nephi 14:3 **The Lamb of God (Chiastic Center)**:

In the companion volume to this commentary, *The Covenant Story*, which contains the text of the Book of Mormon, the term "Lamb" as a title of the Lord has been bolded in order to emphasize its significance as a central message of the book of 1st Nephi. The term "Lamb" (with its covenant sacrificial and atonement symbolism) has been cited as the "literal" chiastic center

of 1 Nephi. It sits at the center of 164 elements repeated in reverse order, extending from "the Lamb of God" (1 Nephi 14:3). (See the commentary on 1 Nephi 1:2.) While the term "Lamb" is used 57 times in chapters 10-14 of 1 Nephi, it is used only 14 other times in the rest of the Book of Mormon:

by Nephi 4 times       (2 Nephi 31:4,5,6; 33:14)  
by Alma 2 times(Alma 7:14; 13:11)  
by Amulek 1 time       (Alma 34:36)  
by Mormon 1 time       (Helaman 6:5)  
by Moroni 5 times       (Mormon 9:2,3,6; Ether 13:10,11)

Interestingly, the deity title "Lamb" does not occur in the Old Testament portion of our present King James Version. However, Isaiah's mention of one who is "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7; see Mosiah 14:7) in his prophecy of Christ is most revealing. The title "Lamb of God" is first mentioned by John (John 1:36), and the title "Lamb" occurs 25 times in the book of Revelation. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [For interesting commentary relative to "the Lamb," see 1 Nephi 10:10; 11:32-33; 12:11; 12:18; 13:28; 13:39; 14:3]

#### 1 Nephi 14:3 **That Great Pit . . . Shall Be Filled By Those Who Dugged It:**

Satan has prepared a spiritual trap for the saints of God. Nephi sees that the Lord will preserve and protect the saints and that the great and abominable church will be cast into the pit. Nephi more vividly explains how this happens in chapter 22 of 1 Nephi:

And the blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads; for they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood.

And every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned one against another, and they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord. And all that fight against Zion shall be destroyed, and that great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord, yea, that great and abominable church, shall tumble to the dust and great shall be the fall of it.

For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men (1 Ne 22:13-15).

The secret as to how the wicked will be destroyed is said to be because they shall war among themselves. This is interesting because John the Revelator uses the same imagery of a pit to preface his discussion of the wars he sees occurring in the last days. See Rev 9:1-11, 11:7, 17:8-

18. Finally, after Satan makes war with the saints, an angel casts Satan into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled (Rev 20:1-3).

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#### 1 Nephi 14:3 **Not the Destruction of the Soul:**

Some denominations teach that at death, there is no spirit. The body is placed in the grave and the spirit of the individual does not exist until the resurrection. This comes from the incorrect interpretation of some scriptures in Ecclesiastes. For example, For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten (Eccles 9:5). This means that a dead man has no more earthly rewards and that the living will not remember them forever. Later in the same book, the principle that the spirit lives on after death is clearly taught, Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it (Eccles 12:7). The Book of Mormon teaches what should be an obvious principle, that the spirit or soul is not destroyed but awaits the resurrection in either spirit paradise or hell.

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#### 1 Nephi 14:3 **Hell Which Hath No End:**

McConkie and Millet write:

“Hell is that portion of the postmortal spirit world wherein the wicked suffer and repent and reconsider. It is also known as ‘outer darkness,’ a place of ‘weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,’ this because of the wickedness of those who have suffered themselves to be led captive by Lucifer (see Alma 40:13-14). The ‘lake of fire and brimstone,’ whose flames ascend up forever and ever, is descriptive of the torment of conscience in this place (see Teachings, pp. 310-11, 357). Both paradise and hell have an end in the Resurrection. Hell is the gateway to the telestial kingdom. It is endless in the sense that those who experience it are subject to the punishment of God, whose name is Endless (D&C 19:10-12).”

[McConkie and Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 108]

## 1 Nephi 14:7 **A Great and Marvelous Work:**

The “marvelous work and a wonder” doctrine comes from Isaiah, Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid....And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel (Isa 29:14,18-19). What is marvelous and a wonder is the work the Lord performs in the last days. Verse 18 above shows that the Book of Mormon plays a role in the process but is not the “marvelous work and a wonder.” The phrase means that the Lord will build a kingdom in the latter days using the simple and meek of the earth. He will gather the tribes of Israel by a great missionary effort that will be successful because of the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures. LeGrand Richards explains how crucial the ministry of Joseph Smith was to this process.

“Joseph Smith, or any other man, could not have obtained all this information by reading the Bible or studying all the books that have ever been written. It came from God. It is exactly what Isaiah promised the Lord would do when conditions upon the earth should become as Joseph Smith found them when he went into the woods to pray for light as to which of all the churches he should join....

“It truly is a marvelous work and a wonder. Can you conceive of anything that could be more marvelous or more wonderful?

“In the face of it all, the wisdom of wise men does perish. The world has no satisfactory explanation. In the Church Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City are more than 20,000 volumes, large and small, each of which says something about the Prophet Joseph Smith. There are also some 2,000 pamphlets on the subject. Many of these publications represent attempts on the part of non-Mormon writers to explain the conundrum of Joseph Smith and the work he established, but all without avail. All these writings have been accumulated since the birth of Joseph Smith in 1805. In contrast, in the more than two centuries that have elapsed since the birth of George Washington, it is reported, there are only some 3,000 volumes written about him on file in the Library of Congress....

“We emphasized a statement published in the New York Herald, which we quoted in this chapter; ‘Joseph Smith is creating a spiritual system, combined with morals and industry that may change the destiny of the race.’ This statement was made in 1842, and at this writing, more than a century and a half later, it is evident, from the present accomplishments of the Church founded under his leadership, that this prognostication is sure to achieve a complete fulfillment.

“It is equally sure that the prediction of Josiah Quincy, previously quoted, will find its fulfillment:

“It is by no mans improbable that some future textbook, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: ‘Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet.’” (A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, pp. 411-2)

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### 1 Nephi 14:9 **Mother of Abominations:**

According to Kevin and Shauna Christensen, we should examine both the narrative and the symbolic complex to which the "mother of abominations" symbol belongs (see 1 Nephi 14:9-16). Far from being a statement about gender, it derives from the internal logic of a symbolic narrative. And as we shall see, that symbolic narrative grows out of a specific cultural context. The Christensens note the words of Northrop Frye concerning "mother of abominations":

We have next to set this apocalyptic structure in its context. In the first place, there is the problem that the nations outside Israel--Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Phoenicia--are as a rule more wealthy, prosperous, and successful than Israel. They possess the power and domination that the Israelites themselves desperately longed to possess, and would certainly have regarded as a signal mark of divine favor if they had possessed it. The only recourse is to show this heathen success in a context of demonic parody, as a short-lived triumph that has all the marks of the real thing except permanence. It follows that there must be two forms of demonic imagery: the parody-demonic, attached to temporarily successful heathen nations; and the manifest, or you-just-wait demonic, the ruins and wasteland haunted by hyenas and screech owls that all this glory will inevitably become . . .

As an example of this structure, let us look at a group of female figures in the Bible. We may divide them into two groups: the maternal and the marital, mother figures and bride figures. Apocalyptic mother figures include the Virgin Mary and the mysterious woman crowned with stars who appears at the beginning of Revelation 12, and who is presented also as the mother of the Messiah. Bridal figures include the central female character of the Song of Songs and the symbolic Jerusalem of Revelation 21 who descends to earth prepared "like a bride adorned for her husband" and is finally identified with the Christian Church. . . . Eve in particular is the intermediate female maternal figure, "our general mother," in Milton's phrase, going through the cycle of sin

and redemption . . .

The demonic counterpart of the Bride who is Jerusalem and the spouse of Christ is the Great Whore of Revelation 17 who is Babylon and Rome, and is the mistress of Antichrist. . . .

But, of course, Israel itself is symbolically the chosen bride of God, and is also frequently unfaithful to him. . . . Thus, the forgiven harlot, who is taken back eventually into favor despite her sins, is an intermediate bridal figure between the demonic Whore and the apocalyptic Bride, and represents the redemption of man from sin.<sup>xci</sup>

Thus the image of the great whore has a specific context as one symbol among many, some positive, some negative, some transitional, in a complex narrative of covenant, fall, forgiveness, judgment, and redemption for Israel collectively. Remember that in this scenario, the female symbols, positive and negative, represent all of us, male and female.

[Kevin and Shauna Christensen, "Nephite Feminism Revisited: Thoughts on Carol Lynn Pearson's View of Women in the Book of Mormon," in FARMS Review of Books, Volume 10, Number 2, 1998, pp. 31-32]

#### 1 Nephi 14:10 **Behold, There Are Save Two Churches Only:**

In Nephi's vision, the angel said to him,

thou knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish. Therefore, wo be unto the Gentiles if it so be that they harden their hearts against the Lamb of God . . .

Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel? . . . Behold there are save two churches only, the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the Devil" (1 Nephi 14:5, 10)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: "There is only light and darkness; there is no dusky twilight zone [in regard to covenant salvation]. Either men walk in the light or they cannot be saved. Anything less than salvation is not salvation. It may be better to walk in the twilight or to glimpse the first few rays of a distant dawn than to be enveloped in total darkness, but salvation itself is only for those who step forth into the blazing light of the noonday sun." (*The Millennial Messiah*, p. 54).

According to Joseph McConkie and Robert Millet, many in the religious world claim that no church is better than any other, just different. As "all roads lead to Rome," it is reasoned that all beliefs must lead to heaven. If all religious paths do indeed lead to heaven, the righteous will be at a considerable disadvantage. If the gates of the celestial city are to be thrown open that widely, why the need for Apostles and prophets, their doctrines, their priesthood and keys; indeed, why the need for the Savior himself and a strait and narrow way?

The doctrine of one true church is as offensive to much of the Christian world today as was the testimony of Christ anciently that he was "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. I, pp. 109, 111]

Note\* There is only one true way to eternal life and that is by obedience to valid covenants. That is what the Book of Mormon testifies. When one comes to an understanding of the Lord's covenant process of salvation, what great things the Lord did with our fathers in bringing them to a knowledge of this covenant process, and that this message is being sent forth to all the world, then one can not help but become convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations (see the Title Page) [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

#### 1 Nephi 14:10 **She Is the Whore of All the Earth:**

The great and abominable church and the church of the Lamb are symbolized by women of differing moral purity. The great and abominable church is represented by a whore, and the church of the Lamb is represented by a bride adorned for her husband, That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness...And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens (D&C 109:74-5).

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#### 1 Nephi 14:12 **The Church of the Lamb . . . Its Numbers Were Few:**

Nephi saw our day. He saw a relatively small group on whom the power of the Lamb had descended (v. 14) who were spread all over the earth. This great dispensation of the fullness of times has been seen by many prophets. Moroni said, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing (Mormon 8:35). The latter days were also shown to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the brother of Jared, Enoch, Moses, Zechariah, John the Revelator, Paul, and many others.

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#### 1 Nephi 14:12 **Saints:**

In 1 Nephi 14:12 we find that Nephi "beheld that the church of the Lamb . . . were the saints of God." One might wonder just what constitutes a "saint." According to the LDS Bible



Dictionary, the word *saint* is a translation of a Greek word also rendered "holy," the fundamental idea being that of consecration or separation for a sacred purpose. [Or in other words, "saints" are people who have been separated from the world by covenant to be God's holy servants.] We find in the New Testament that the saints are all those who by baptism have entered into the Christian covenant (see Acts 9:13,32,41; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 1:14-15).

Tradition has somewhat warped the meaning of the word "saint" down through time. Bible scholars have incorrectly reasoned that since what was set apart for God must be without blemish, then a "saint" must be "free from blemish," whether physical or moral. [LDS Bible Dictionary, pp. 767-768]

According to Bruce R. McConkie, the term "saints" is one of the most frequently used designations of the Lord's people. Saints are named nearly 40 times in the Old Testament, over 60 times in the New Testament, about 30 times in the Book of Mormon, and over 70 times in the Doctrine and Covenants. [Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 667]

#### 1 Nephi 14:17 **At That Day, the Work of the Father Shall Commence:**

The "work of the Father" referred to here has to do with fulfilling specific covenants made with the house of Israel. They include the return of the Jews to the land of their inheritance, the gathering of Israel (Isa 43:5-7), the building of a temple in Jerusalem (Isa 44:28), the promise that the Gentiles shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders (Isa 49:22). The Lord has promised Israel, I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children (Isa 49:25), and Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem (Isa 52:9). Not much progress had been made in the fulfilling of these covenants before the second world war. This places the timing of the events of verse 17 in the 20th century.

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#### 1 Nephi 14:19-20 **One of the Twelve . . . Shall See and Write the Remainder of These Things:**

Nephi next sees the events which transpire directly preceding the Second Coming. He is told that John will record these events in the future. Many prophets have prophesied about the same events. In an unusual precedent, Nephi is not allowed to describe the events he sees next. Why would this be? There are a couple of reasons. First, apparently John was foreordained to perform this work. (By the way, this is probably the single best scriptural example of the

doctrine of foreordination.) Secondly, the Lord in his wisdom does not give the world all of his mysteries. The book of Revelation is not meant to be understood by the wicked; it is written for those with the spirit of prophecy. If one does not have the Spirit, it is impossible to make sense out of the imagery contained in the Revelation. For those with the spirit of prophecy, it is not impossible to understand. Joseph Smith said, "The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 290)

The timeline here is interesting. Nephi describes events that occur in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Next he is commanded to stop writing because the things he sees shall be written by the Apostle John. This would suggest that the events which take place during the seventh seal are near, even at the door (JS-M 1:39).

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

#### 1 Nephi 14:24 **The Things Which This Apostle of the Lamb Will Write:**

Nephi saw everything in vision that John the Revelator saw but was commanded not to write what John would write. Nephi used the term "lamb" when referring to Jesus Christ more than any other Book of Mormon writer (see the commentary on 1 Nephi 10:10). John used the term "Lamb" more than any other New Testament writer (twenty-eight times in the Book of Revelation). Their unique use of this word suggests that they were given the same vision. [Zarahemla Research Foundation, [Study Book of Mormon](#), p. 30]

Note\* For the benefit of the reader, the term "lamb (of God)" has been highlighted in the text of *The Covenant Story* for the chapters which deal with Nephi's Vision (1 Nephi 11-14). In just these few chapters the term "the Lamb (of God)" not only appears over fifty times, but is connected with Christ and defined in a multitude of ways. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

#### 1 Nephi 14:26 **And Also Others Who Have Been, to Them Hath He Shown All Things:**

During his heavenly vision, the prophet Lehi was given a book to read. From that book he learned of the fate of the city of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:11-13), and he also learned about the coming of the Messiah (see 1 Nephi 1:19). Nephi later experienced a vision concerning the future of his descendants (1 Nephi 13-14). He then informed his readers that he had been shown these things by "the angel of the Lord" (1 Nephi 14:29) "and also others who have been, to them hath he shown all things, and they have written them, and they are sealed up to come forth in their purity, according to the truth which is in the Lamb" (1 Nephi 14:26).

John Tvedtnes comments that in *Jubilees* 3:21-29, we read that Jacob, during his second

vision at Bethel (when returning from Syria), read from seven heavenly tablets brought to him by an angel. The tablets recorded all that would happen to his sons in the future, and Jacob documented this and everything else he saw in the vision. The story is told in first person in a Dead Sea Scrolls fragment, (4QAJa ar), which is sometimes called the *Apocryphon of Jacob*.

The *Cologne Mani Codex* cites portions of the now lost *Apocalypse of Enosh* (Enosh was the son of Seth and grandson of Adam). The *Apocalypse*, a first-person account, notes that an angel appeared to Enosh (spelled Enos in the King James Bible) and brought him to a mountain, where "He spoke to me and said: 'The Pre-Eminent Almighty One has sent me to you so that I might reveal to you the secret (things) which you contemplated, since indeed you have chosen truth. Write down all these hidden things upon bronze tablets and deposit (them) in the wilderness.'" The abbreviated account then notes that "many things similar to these are in his writings (which) set forth his ascension and revelation, for everything that he heard and saw he recorded (and) left behind for the subsequent generations."<sup>xcii</sup>

Adam evidently hid the book away, for four generation later its location (in a cave) was revealed to Enoch in a dream. Enoch read the book and then hid it away. The book was later delivered to Noah by the angel Raphael, and from it he learned how to build the ark. Before entering the ark, Noah hid the book away, but it seems that he later retrieved it, for he passed it to Shem, who transmitted it to succeeding generations.

In Jewish and Samaritan tradition, when Moses ascended the mountain to converse with God, he actually went to heaven.<sup>xciii</sup> One Samaritan text says that "he ascended to heaven, and the Torah [law] was put on his hand."<sup>xciv</sup> According to *Jubilees* 1:27-2;1, an angel of the presence<sup>xcv</sup> brought to Moses tablets containing the history of the world, from the first creation until the sanctuary of God would be built forever in the midst of Israel. Moses was instructed to copy part of the account, and this portion formed the basis of the Pentateuch and of *Jubilees* itself. The commentary on the law of Moses written by the Samaritan Marqa (*Memar Marqa*) also says that Moses, enthroned in the presence of God and angels, wrote down the words of the heavenly book as dictated to him by God.<sup>xcvi</sup> The story is confirmed in *Moses* 1:40-41; 2:1, where we read that God dictated to Moses and told him to write his words in a book (compare with *Jubilees* 1f:4-5, 26).

According to the Qur' an, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus, and David received heavenly books (see Surah 2:50; 3:48; 17:57; 19:13, 31).  
[John Tvedtnes, *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books: Out of Darkness unto Light*, pp. 76-90] [See the commentary on Ether 3:25]

1 Nephi 14:26 **Other . . . to Them Hath He Shown All Things:**

[Note\* EXPAND THE COMMENTARY HERE ON JUST HOW MANY!]

**1 Nephi 14:29 I [Nephi] Saw the Things Which My Father [Lehi] Saw:**

According to McConkie and Millet, the statement by Nephi that "I saw the things which my father saw" (1 Nephi 14:29) is strong evidence for the fact that Lehi's dream was far more extensive in scope than what is contained in Nephi's abridged account in 1 Nephi 8. [Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 115]

**1 Nephi 14:29 I Bear Record That I Saw the Things Which My Father Saw:**

Steven Olsen theorizes that the interpretive unity of Nephi's second record (small plates) is provided by his vision of the Savior and the plan of salvation in the promised land (1 Nephi 11-14). According to Olsen, this vision defines the covenant themes which permeate his writings.

Nephi's account of his vision is a literal representation of a portion of the plan of salvation. The difference between Lehi's dream and Nephi's literal vision lies at the heart of the message of the Book of Mormon. By representing the plan of salvation in literal historical happenings, rather than the allegorical terms of Lehi's dream, Nephi defined a consciousness of history in which God acts through spatial, temporal, and human contexts to effect the salvation of his children.

Nephi's vision identifies three essential elements to this plan of salvation: Christ's gospel, the Promised Land, and the House of Israel. In his record, they are defined in conventional terms, elaborated in prophecy and spiritual experiences and lived through historical experience.

It is interesting to note that of the more than 200 specific prophecies in the Book of Mormon, less than 10 are not expressly anticipated by Nephi. [Steven L. Olsen, Covenants in the Book of Mormon, Unpublished Manuscript]

**1 Nephi 14:29 I Bear Record That I Saw the Things Which My Father Saw:**

John Welch notes that in 1 Nephi 8, Lehi saw the tree of life, an iron rod, a great and spacious building, and various people reaching the tree or falling away. In 1 Nephi 11-14, Nephi beheld the condescension of God, the twelve apostles of the Lamb, wars between his posterity and the seed of his brothers, a great and abominable coalition of evil, and the eventual victory of God's people.

The two visions are very different in character. Lehi's dream is intimate, symbolic, and salvific; Nephi's vision is collective, historic, and eschatological. Yet both visions embrace the same prophetic elements, only from different angles.

Intriguingly, when we set these two visions side by side, they are indeed significantly the same, element for element (see the elements charted below). Although the casual reader might not see any connection between these two texts at first, the correlation between them is extensive and precise. It is unlikely that this occurred accidentally. Nephi was well aware of his father's vision, so much so that he desired "to behold the things which [his] father saw" (1 Nephi 11:3). As different as these two visions may appear at first glance, Nephi clearly and correctly bore record "that I saw the things which my father saw" (1 Nephi 14:29). Thus Nephi spoke from personal experience when he subsequently interpreted the meanings of the tree, the iron rod and the river of water in his father's vision (see 1 Nephi 15:21-29).

At the same time, Nephi's vision is not a mere rerun of Lehi's. The second clearly develops each element of the first, from different perspectives and for different purposes. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that Joseph Smith or others at first were aware of the nature or extent of this development, because the styles of the two texts are so different. [John W. Welch, "Connections between the Visions of Lehi and Nephi," in Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., 1999, pp. 49, 52]

## A Comparison of Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision

### 1 Nephi 8

Dark and dreary wilderness (4)  
 Man dressed in white robe (5)

Man lead the way (6)  
 Man leaves (7--OM)  
 Dark and dreary waste (8)  
 Prayer for mercy (8)  
 Large and spacious field (9)  
 Tree (10)  
 Fruit desirable to make happy (10)  
 Sweet and white above all (11)  
 Soul filled with joy (12)  
 Desire to share with family (12)  
 Head of river near the tree (14)  
 Call with loud voice (15)  
 Come partake of fruit (15-15)  
 Laman and Lemuel do not (17-18)  
 Rod of iron (19)  
 Straight and narrow path (20)  
 Large and spacious field (20)

Numberless concourses coming (21)  
 Mist of darkness (23)  
 Lose their way and are lost (23)  
 Others come to tree and partake (24)  
 River is a divider (26)  
 Great and spacious building (26)  
 Fine dress, mocking (27)  
 They fell away (28)  
 Break (29)  
 Other multitudes partake (30)  
 Others go to great and spacious (31)

Many drowned in the depths (32)  
 Many are lost in strange roads roads (32)

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### 1 Nephi 11-14

High mountain (11:1)

Spirit speaks (11:2, 11)  
 Spirit's introductory questions (11:2)  
 Spirit departs (11:12)  
 Jerusalem (11:13)

Tree (11:7, 13, 18, 20, 25)  
 Love of God, most desirable (11:22)  
 Mos, beautiful and fair (11:15)  
 Carried away in the spirit (11:19)

Fountain of living waters (11:25)  
 Christ, John, Apostles preach (11:24-31)

People reject Christ (11:32-33)  
 Rod of iron (11:25)  
 The Apostles preach (11:34)  
 Great and spacious building (11:35)

Multitudes like sand (12:1)  
 Mists of darkness (12:17)  
 Broad roads and are lost (12:17)  
 Four generations (12:10-12)

Great gulf divideth them (12:18)  
 Great and spacious (12:18)  
 Pride and vain imaginations (12:18)  
 The good are overpowered (12:19)  
 War between seed (12:20-23)  
 Gentile nations (13:3)  
 Great and abominable (13:4-9)

Restoration of Lehi's seed through a great and marvelous work (13:10-14:7)

Where upon the waters (14:11)  
 Wars and chaos (14:16)

1 Nephi 14:29 **I bear record that I saw the things which my father saw (Illustration):** A Comparison of Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision. [John Welch and Morgan Ashton, "A Comparison of Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision," in Charting the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., Packet 1.

# A Comparison of Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision

Reference	Lehi's Dream: 1 Nephi 8	Nephi's Vision: 1 Nephi 11-14	Reference
8:4	Dark and dreary wilderness	High mountain	11:1
8:5	Man dressed in white robe	Spirit speaks	11:2, 11
8:6	Man leads the way	Spirit's introductory questions	11:2
8:7-8	Man leaves (implied)	Spirit departs	11:12
8:7-8	Dark and dreary waste	Jerusalem	11:13
8:8	Prayer for mercy		
8:9	Large and spacious field		
8:10	Tree	Tree	11:7, 13-18, 20-25
8:10	Fruit desirable to make happy	Love of God most desirable	11:22
8:11	Fruit sweet and white above all	Virgin most beautiful and fair	11:15
8:12	Soul filled with joy	Carried away in the spirit	11:19
8:12	Desire to share with family		
8:14	Head of river near the tree	Fountain of living waters	11:25
8:15	Call with loud voice	Christ, John, apostles preach	11:24-31
8:15-16	Come partake of fruit		
8:17-18	Laman, Lemuel do not partake	People reject Christ	11:32-33
8:19	Rod of iron	Rod of iron	11:25
8:20	Straight and narrow path	The apostles preach	11:34
8:20	Large and spacious field	Large and spacious building	11:35
8:21	Numberless concourses coming	Multitudes like sand	12:1
8:23	Mist of darkness	Mists of darkness	12:17
8:23	Lose their way and are lost	Broad roads and are lost	12:17
8:24	Others come to tree and partake	Four generations	12:10-12
8:26	River is a divider	Great gulf divideth them	12:18
8:26	Great and spacious building	Large and spacious building	12:18
8:27	Fine dress, mocking	Pride and vain imaginations	12:18
8:28	They fell away	The good are overpowered	12:19
8:29	[Break in Nephi's recitation]	War between seed	12:20-23
8:30	Other multitudes partake	Gentile nations	13:3
8:31	Great and spacious building	Great and abominable church	13:4-9
		Restoration of Lehi's seed through a great and marvelous work	13:10-14:7
8:32	Many drowned in the depths	Whore upon the waters	14:11
8:32	Many are lost in strange roads	Wars and chaos	14:16

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1 Nephi 14:30 **And Thus It Is. Amen:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, the word "Amen," as a substantive, means "truth," as in Isaiah 65:16: "He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of Truth

(Amen); and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of Truth (Amen)." In the letter which John was directed to write to the bishop in Laodicea, Jesus calls himself, "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14. See also Revelation 19:11). As part of the Mosaic ritual it was a strong confirmation, as in Numbers 5:22, or Deuteronomy 27:14-26. At the close of a prayer, as in Psalm 106:48, (Compare 1 Corinthians 14:16) it means, "May it so be." Our Lord frequently uses the word as a solemn affirmation, as for instance in John 3:3, "Amen, amen, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," where, however, the English version has, "Verily, verily."

The ancient Egyptians had a god, Amen, whom the priest at Thebes endeavored to introduce as superior to Osiris, but not successfully. . . . The name of this divinity is one evidence among many of the close association between the Hebrews and the Egyptians.  
[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 144]

**1 Nephi 15:5 I Was Overcome . . . Because of the Destruction of My People, For I Had Beheld Their Fall:**

Nephi mourned over the wickedness and destruction of the Nephites. This anguish of soul comes from having a heart full of charity such that the thought of any son or daughter of God suffering the punishments decreed for the wicked brings a heaviness and godly sorrow. This same emotion is seen in a couple of other scriptures. Of the repentant sons of Mosiah, Mosiah records, Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble (Mosiah 28:3). In an unusually plain and precious record, Enoch saw the Lord God Almighty weep over his creations. After the Father had shown Enoch the wickedness of the people, Enoch wept also. The record is as follows:

‘And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands...

Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also, and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren.

But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them,



even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?

But behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and behold, I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them.

And That which I have chosen hath pled before my face. Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me, and until that day they shall be in torment;

Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook." (Moses 7:28-41)

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#### **1 Nephi 15:5 I Was Overcome . . . Because of the Destruction of My People:**

The vision of the future destruction of his people created the kind of distress in Nephi that only a righteous parent can feel for wayward children. As Nephi reports: " I was overcome because of my afflictions, for I considered that mine afflictions were great above all, because of the destruction of my people, for I had beheld their fall." (1 Nephi 15:5)

According to Douglas and Robert Clark, one cannot fully appreciate Nephi's grief without considering the larger covenant context of his writings, in particular the Abrahamic covenant (see 1 Nephi 6:4, 15:18; 17:40; 19:10; 22:9; 2 Nephi 8:2; 27:33; 29:14). As one eminent modern scholar has observed about that Abrahamic covenant, "Its core is the blessing and promise of posterity; this is linked with a promise of victory, and the effect of the blessing on the nations."<sup>xcvii</sup> Specifically, because Abraham had not withheld his son Isaac, the Lord had sworn to him, "In blessing I will bless thee" (Genesis 22:17). According to some, this slavishly literal translation for Genesis 22:17 in the King James text tends to obscure the meaning. In Hebrew the juxtaposition of different forms of the same verb acts as an intensifier,<sup>xcviii</sup> so that the meaning is, as more modern translations express it, "I will indeed bless you"<sup>xcix</sup> or "surely bless you"<sup>c</sup> or "greatly bless you"<sup>ci</sup> or "bless you abundantly"<sup>cii</sup> or "shower blessings on you."<sup>ciii</sup> Furthermore, the Lord promised, "In multiplying I will multiply thy seed" (again the verbal intensifier) "as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Genesis 22:17) (a promise of victory<sup>civ</sup>), "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:17). . . . Against such a

background Nephi's grief becomes as profound as was his "delight" in the Lord's covenant to Abraham (see 2 Nephi 11:5).

[E. Douglas Clark and Robert S. Clark, Fathers and Sons in the Book of Mormon, pp. 15-16]

#### 1 Nephi 15:11 **Do Ye Not Remember the Things Which the Lord Hath Said?:**

In response to Nephi's question, "Have ye inquired of the Lord?" his brothers said, "We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us." Nephi then replied, "Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?" (1 Nephi 15:11) and then apparently quoted from a scriptural text, "If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you." According to McConkie and Millet, this promise had apparently been recorded on the plates of brass.

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 116]

#### 1 Nephi 15:12 **The House of Israel Was Compared unto an Olive Tree:**

Note\* This doctrine will be dealt with more completely in Jacob 5. Suffice it to say that the tame olive tree is symbolic of the house of Israel. The family of Lehi represents a branch that was planted in the nethermost part of the vineyard, And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard went his way, and hid the natural branches of the tame olive-tree in the nethermost parts of the vineyard, some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure (Jacob 5:14). See also Jacob 5:25,43,44,52.

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

#### 1 Nephi 15:13 **And Now, the Thing Which Our Father Meaneth Concerning the Grafting In of the Natural Branches through the Fulness of the Gentiles:**

According to Dennis Largey, one strength of the Book of Mormon is that it restores and expands upon doctrinal concepts that are only briefly mentioned in the Bible. One example is found in the New Testament book of Romans. The apostle Paul described himself as the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). In his epistle to the Romans he referred to the Gentiles as being a wild olive tree, to be grafted into the natural tree (i.e., Israel), to partake of the root. He told the Gentile audience that the natural branches were broken off because of unbelief and warned them that since "God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. . . . For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be

wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until *the fulness of the Gentiles* be come in" (Romans 11:21,25; italics added).

Here, there is no sustained discussion concerning his reference to "the fulness of the Gentiles." By way of commentary, in 1 Nephi 15:7 we read: "And they [Laman and Lemuel] said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive-tree, and also concerning the Gentiles." In reply, Nephi taught:

Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father; and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel?

And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through *the fulness of the Gentiles*, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years, and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed. (1 Nephi 15:12-13; italics added)

Here Nephi not only answered his brothers' questions, but also gave the New Testament student a definitive statement of interpretation to Paul's reference. In the latter days, the fulness of the gospel would come to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles would then take it to the house of Israel. This would cure the blindness that "happened to Israel" which Paul talked about in Romans 11, for as Nephi further taught, "They shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is the Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel" (1 Nephi 22:12).

[Dennis Largey, "The Book of Mormon, an Interpretive Guide to the New Testament," in The New Testament and the Latter-day Saints, 1987, pp. 138-139] [For a much greater elaboration on the concept of the wild olive-tree, see the commentary on Jacob 5--Zenos' Allegory of the Tame and Wild Olive Tree]

#### 1 Nephi 15:13-20 (Climax Parallelism):

According to Donald Parry, parallelism is universally recognized as the characteristic feature of biblical Hebrew poetry. (p. i)

Apparently, **the prophets and writers of the scriptures employed parallel structure of parallel lines for the purpose of reinforcing their teachings and doctrines.** (p. x)

One of these parallelistic structures is called "Climax." Climax occurs when, in successive clauses or sentences, the same word or words are found at the end of one expression and at the beginning of the next. Climax is a form of staircase parallelism, because it demonstrates to the reader a gradual ascent through the recurrence of several identical words. This duplication of words creates a continuation of thought from one sentence to the next. (pp. xviii)

A fine example of Climax is found in 1 Nephi 15:13-20:

13 **And now,**

the thing which our father meaneth  
concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fulness of the  
Gentiles,

is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief,  
yea, for the space of  
many years, and  
many generations after  
the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness  
of the gospel of the Messiah come unto  
the Gentiles, and from  
the Gentiles unto

the remnant of our seed— 14 And at that day shall  
the remnant of our seed know that they are of  
the house of Israel, and that they are  
the covenant people of the Lord; and  
then shall they know and  
come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also  
[come ] to the knowledge of the gospel

of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore,  
they shall  
come to the knowledge

of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may  
know how to come unto him and  
[know how to] be saved. 15 And then

at that day will they not rejoice and give praise unto Their Everlasting God Their Rock and  
Their

Salvation? Yea

at that day,  
will they not receive the strength and nourishment from The True Vine? Yea,  
will they not come unto the true fold of God? 16 Behold, I say unto you, Yea;  
they shall be remembered again among the house of Israel;  
they shall be grafted in, being a natural branch of  
the olive tree, into

the true olive tree. 17 And this is what our  
father meaneth; and

he meaneth that it will not come to pass until after they are scattered by  
the Gentiles; and he meaneth that it shall come by way of  
the Gentiles, that the Lord may show his power unto  
the Gentiles, for the very cause that he shall be rejected of the Jews, or of

the house of Israel. 18 Wherefore, our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all

the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord made to our father

ABRAHAM, saying: In

*[Climax]*

THY SEED shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. (see Gen 17:5-9; 3 Ne 20:25-31)

**19 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake much unto them**

concerning these things; yea, I spake unto them

concerning the restoration of the Jews in the latter days.

**20 And I did rehearse unto them the words of ISAIAH1, who spake**

concerning the restoration of the Jews, or of the house of Israel;

and after they were restored they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again.

And it came to pass that I did speak many words unto my brethren, that they were pacified and did humble themselves before the Lord.

[Donald W. Parry, The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns, F.A.R.M.S., ppi. 26-27 ]

#### 1 Nephi 15:15 **Nourishment For the True Vine:**

One of the most common criticisms of the Book of Mormon is that its themes are anachronistic. In other words, it sounds too much like the New Testament to have been written hundreds of years before the coming of Christ. The image of Christ as a “vine” is an example. It is first seen in the Bible in the New Testament when Christ says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman (John 15:1). How could Nephi have used this image before Christ did? How could this theme be known to him at that time?

Nephi was a prophet who had just seen an incredible vision of the history of the world including the life and ministry of the Savior. He had the spirit of prophecy and taught Messianic principles that would be contained also in the Old Testament if so many plain and precious parts had not been taken away from that record.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were examined, both the Jews and the non-Mormon Christians were astonished because the scrolls contained so much “New Testament” doctrine but were written prior to the coming of Christ. This finding doesn’t surprise a student of the Book of Mormon. It confirms that the Lord was teaching his Old Testament era prophets the higher law long before it was given by the Savior in the flesh.

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

**1 Nephi 15:15-16 The True Vine . . . the True Olive-Tree:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, an olive branch was the emblem of peace. The door and posts of the entrance to the temple, and also to the holy of holies, were made of olive wood, to symbolize the access to God through peace as a result of the atonement. The two large cherubim on the ark were also made of olive wood. (1 Kings 6:23,31,33).

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 148]

**1 Nephi 15:18 Pointing to the Covenant Which Should Be Fulfilled in the Latter Days; Which Covenant the Lord Made to Our Father Abraham:**

According to Russell M. Nelson, the Book of Mormon teaches that we or modern Israel are among the covenant people of the Lord (1 Nephi 14:14; 15:14; 2 Nephi 30:2; Mosiah 24:13; 3 Nephi 29:3; Mormon 8:15). And, most remarkably, it teaches that the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled only in these latter days (1 Nephi 15:12-18; 3 Nephi 20:25-31). In 1 Nephi 15:18 we find the following:

Wherefore, our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

The Lord bestowed this Abrahamic covenant upon the Prophet Joseph Smith for the blessing of him and posterity after him (see D&C 124:56-59). Did you know that Abraham is mentioned in more verses of modern revelation than in all the verses of the Old Testament? Abraham is mentioned in 506 verses of scripture, 289 of which are in modern revelation. [Russell M. Nelson, "Remnants Gathered, Covenants Fulfilled," in Voices of Old Testament Prophets: The 26th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, p. 9, 18] [See Abraham 2:9-11]

**1 Nephi 15:18 Which Covenant the Lord Made to Our Father Abraham:**

According to Bruce R. McConkie, Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation): then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase; finally he received a promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity. (Abraham 2:6-11; D&C 132:29-50) Included in

the divine promises to Abraham was the assurance that Christ would come through his lineage, and the assurance that Abraham's posterity would receive certain choice, promised lands as an eternal inheritance. (Abraham 2; Genesis 17; I 22:15-18; Galatians 3) All of these promises lumped together are called the *Abrahamic covenant*.

This covenant was renewed with Isaac (Genesis 24:60; 26:1-4, 24) and again with Jacob. (Genesis 28; 35:9-13; 48:3-4) Those portions of it which pertain to personal exaltation and eternal increase are renewed with each member of the house of Israel who enters the order of celestial marriage; through that order the participating parties become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (D&C 132; Romans 9:4; Galatians 3; 4) [Bruce R. McConkie, "Abrahamic Covenant," in Mormon Doctrine, p. 13] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 22:9; Helaman 8:18; 3 Nephi 20:25, 20:27, 25:4-5; Mormon 5:20; Ether 13:11]

#### 1 Nephi 15:18 **In Thy [Abraham's] Seed Shall All the Kindreds of the Earth Be Blessed:**

It should be noted that Paul identifies Christ as the seed of Abraham that will bless all nations. In Galatians 3:15-20:

Brethren, I speak after the [covenant] manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; But God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]



1 Nephi 15:18 **Which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham (Illustration):** Abraham on the Plains of Mamre. Artist: Harry Anderson. [S. Michael Wilcox, "The Abrahamic Covenant," in The Ensign, January 1998, p. 43]

### 1 Nephi 15:20 **The Words of Isaiah . . . Concerning the Restoration of the Jews:**

One of the major themes of Isaiah's writings is the restoration of the Jews in the latter days. This may be because he spent so much time prophesying of the imminent destruction of the Northern Kingdom, that he longed for a better day—a day when Israel would again be blessed and protected by the Lord. This blessing won't come to full fruition until the Lord himself sets his foot on the Mount of Olives and begins to fight Israel's battles. Therefore, the writings of Isaiah are full of hopeful, optimistic, and happy representations of what things will be like in that day when the Lord saves Israel, The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord...the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light...Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim...they shall beat their swords into plowshares...he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy...the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads...they that wait upon the Lord shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint...with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee...Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

[[josephsmith.com.1nephi](http://josephsmith.com.1nephi)]

### 1 Nephi 15:28 **An Awful Gulf Which Separated the Wicked from the Tree of Life:**

According to Hugh Nibley, the separation of people by an "awful gulf" (1 Nephi 15:28) begs a cultural note. Remember, Joseph Smith was a product of New England, but Lehi's story-setting was in the desert wilderness. As one walks along in the desert he will encounter one of these awful gulfs. You see them in Canyonlands, etc. There you find a 2,000-foot drop between one side of the canyon and the other. The two sides are almost right together, but you couldn't get from the one to the other. That's exactly what happens to the wicked.



[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 136]

**1 Nephi 15:30 The Justice[s] of God:**

In the Original Manuscript, the phrase "justice of God" reads "justices of God." In Hebrew the plural form is often used to intensify or heighten the idea of the singular. [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 33]

**1 Nephi 15:33 If They Be Filthy It Must Needs Be That They Cannot Dwell in the Kingdom of God:**

Millet and McConkie write:

“Both the justice of God and the laws of nature mandate a division of the wicked from the righteous. The warmth and glory of the noonday sun and midnight's shield of darkness are not compatible companions—light and darkness will never meet, Christ and Satan will never shake hands. The separation of the righteous from the wicked in the world to come is foreshadowed by their separation in mortality. This life, like the one to follow, has its children of light and its children of darkness. The citizens of both kingdoms prepare themselves here for the nature of the society of which they will be a part both in and after death.”

[McConkie and Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 121]

## NOTES

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- i. Hershel Shanks, "An Unpublished Dead Sea Scroll Text Parallels Luke's Infancy Narrative," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16/2 (March-April 1990): 24.
- ii. Simo Parpola, *sons of God: The Ideology of Assyrian Kingship*, Archaeology Odyssey Archives, November/December, 1999.
- iii. Parpola,
- iv. Parpola, Ibid.
- v. Parpola, Ibid.,
- vi. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 57 n. 82, as quoted in Daniel Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah" in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 9, Number 2, 2000, p. 21 & footnote 55 on page 22.
- vii. Peterson, Ibid.
- viii. Abdul Hameed Al Hashash. General Director of Dammam Museum. Ministry of Education Eastern Province, P.O. Box 1797, Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia.
- ix. In 490 A.D., a devout Christian slave admonished his master, "the Palm Tree which you worship is devoid of power . . ." Captain R. L. Playfair, 1859. *A History of Arabia Felix or Yemen from the Commencement of the Christian Era to the Present Time* (Westmead, England: Reprinted in 1970 by Gregg International Publishing Ltd.), p. 62.
- x. Ray L. Cleveland, "'Cherubs and the Tree of Life' in Ancient South Arabia," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 172, December 1963, pp. 55-60.
- xi. Ray L. Cleveland, "An Ancient South Arabian Necropolis. Objects from the Second Campaign (1951) in the Timna Cemetery," *American Foundation for the Study of Man*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, p. 28.
- xii. Kenneth F. Weaver, "The Incredible Universe," *National Geographic*, May 1974, p. 592.
- xiii. See Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Tales and Romances: Pagan, Christian and Muslim* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1935), 280.
- xiv. *The Hebrew Goddess* , 20, 26.
- xv. *The Interpreter's Bible* 1:107.
- xvi. See *The Interpreter's Bible* 1:361-362; see also *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 5:519.
- xvii. See for example Isaiah 14:12-16; *The Interpreter's Bible* 1:361; Jude 6; 1 Kings 22:19-24.
- xviii. *Early History of Israel*, p. 147. See also Michael Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, pp. 24, 26.

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- xix. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 2:675-676. *The Encyclopedia Judaica* 3:704.
- xx. Genesis 5:1-3.
- xxi. See *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2:509, 505-506; see also *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. 1:253.
- xxii. The form of idolatry which was practiced by the Patriarchs is still manifest in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Judges. Remember also the story of Rachel taking her father's images--Genesis 31:19, 34-35; 35:2-4.
- xxiii. *The Interpreter's Bible* 1:310.
- xxiv. Genesis 28:18-22; 31:13; 35:14; Leviticus 18:10-11; Numbers 7:1; Exodus 29:7; 30:25-30.
- xxv. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 2:677; 2 Samuel 23:3; 22:47; Psalms 18:2, 31; 42:9; 1 Corinthians 10:4; Isaiah 51:1; 1 Samuel 2:2; Genesis 31:45; see also *The History of Ancient Israel* (1984) by Michael Grant, p. 26.
- xxvi. See *The History of Ancient Israel* (1984) by Michael Grant, pp. 24, 26.
- xxvii. Asherah was known to the [later Prophets of the] Bible as Baal's consort, though at Ugarit [and earlier during the period of the Patriarchs] she had been El's [consort], the mother of seventy sons. Her name means "upright," for she was a tree goddess, represented either by a tree or by a sacred wooden pole or pillar, that was called *asherah* after her (mistranslated "grove" in the Authorized Version of the Bible).--*The History of Ancient Israel*, (1984) by Michael Grant, p. 24.
- xxviii. Genesis 18:1--Be it remembered that the Bible as we have it today has passed down through thirteen centuries of the Law of Moses, wherein the people were deprived of the whole knowledge of God, and consequently, much of what once was has been removed from the text--there are literally thousands of changes. Between the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint and the Samaritan Bible there are 6000 variations, and many of these reflect a change in theological thinking, wherein Judaism attempted to eradicate the old polytheistic religion of Israel, and to dress or cloak their new religion of monotheism more in accordance with the popular philosophy of the Greeks.
- xxix. Genesis 21:33--In referring to this passage, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* states that: The planting of a tree for the service of God was practiced by Abraham." In continuing it states that "This form of worship was later proscribed by Deuteronomy (16:21) the *mazzevoty* and the planting of trees for the cult of God was widely in use during the time of the Monarchy (1 Kings 14:15, 23; 11(?) Kings 17:10; 23:14). The "brazen serpent" seems also to fall in this group (see 2 Kings 18:4)." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* 8:1228)
- The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* Vol. 2:676 makes the following statement: "The narrative of Gideon's destruction of the fertility shrine of Ophrah (Judges 6:25ff) indicates that the Asherah was by the altar of Baal, and the fact that Gideon burnt his offering to Yahweh with the Asherah which he had cut down indicates that it was of wood. The Hebrew text mentions literally . . . "The trees of the Asherah," and this is probably the source of the belief that the Asherah was a grove. We are not bound, however, to render the Hebrew word . . . so literally, and it may signify simply "wood." A single object seems to be denoted--either a natural tree or a wooden pole as a stylized tree--the term "Asherah" either signifying its "erect" position or being the name of the Canaanite mother-goddess whom it symbolized as the repository of fruitfulness.

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- xxx. Genesis 1:26-28.
- xxxi. *The Hebrew Goddess*, p. 23.
- xxxii. See Ulf Oldenburg, "The Conflict between El and Baal in Canaanite Religion," (1969), pp. 19, 29.
- xxxiii. *The Interpreter's Bible* 1:307; see Numbers 25:1-11; Psalm 106:28; Isaiah 57:3-10; Hosea 13:2.
- xxxiv. See Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p. 24; see also *The History of Ancient Israel* (1985) by Michael Grant, p. 21.
- xxxv. See Roland De Vaux, *The Early History of Israel*, pp. 278-279.
- xxxvi. Numbers 22:41.
- xxxvii. *The Early History of Israel*, 147-148; *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. 1:245.
- xxxviii. *The History of Ancient Israel* (1984) by Michael Grant, p. 24.
- xxxix. *The Interpreter's Bible* 1:307; See Numbers 25:1-11.
- xl. *The Jerusalem Bible*, Exodus 3:4-6, 13-15.
- xli. The King James translation renders it "the Mighty One of Jacob (Genesis 49:24) but numerous scholars have argued that a correct translation would read "the Bull of Jacob" (*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. 1:245). See also *The Jerusalem Bible*, Numbers 23:21-22; 24:8; *The Early History of Israel* 272, 282; *Ugarit and Minoan Crete . . .* by Cyrus H. Gordon (1966), p. 20; *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra--Ugarit* by Claude F. A. Schaeffer (1936), p. 60.
- xlii. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 2:675.
- xliii. *The Early History of Israel*, p. 147; *The History of Ancient Israel* (1984) by Michael Grant, p. 22.
- xliv. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 2:674.
- xlv. *Interpreter's Bible* 1:1065.
- xlvi. (Wainwright, in bibl.).
- xlvii. 1 Kings 12:28-30; 2 Kings 10:29-32.
- xlviii. *The Jerusalem Bible* Exodus 32:4-5; 1 Kings 12:28-30.
- xlix. *The Jerusalem Bible*, Exodus 32:6.
- l. *New International Version*, Exodus 32:6.
- li. See *Clarke's Commentary of the Bible* 1:464; *The Interpreters Bible* 1:1064-1065.

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- lii. *The Jerusalem Bible* Exodus 32:26-29.
- liii. *New International Version, The Jerusalem Bible*, Deuteronomy 16:21-22.
- liv. *New International Version, Jerusalem Bible* Deuteronomy 12:2-3.
- lv. See 1 Kings 3:2-3; 1 Kings 11:5, 33; 14:15; 16:32-33; see also *The Hebrew Goddess* 24-25.
- lvi. *The Hebrew Goddess*, 38-39
- lvii. *The Hebrew Goddess* 59-98.
- lviii. See *Hebrew Goddess* p; 49; and Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible," p. 397.
- lix. See Taylor, "The Two Earliest Known Representations of Yahweh," 558-560, 565. nn. 19; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 29; Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh?" 27; and de Moor, "asherah," 1:441-43. Wiggling, *Reassessment of "Asherah,"* 13, thinks ancient Hebrews would have seen Asherah in the Garden of Eden's tree of life.
- lx. Leon Yardmen, *The Tree of Light: A Study of the Menorah, the Seven-Branched Lampstand* (Uppsala, Sweden: Skriv Service AB, 1972), 44-47, 103-6.
- lxi. See *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, [1985], Hymn no. 292, verse 3.
- lxii. See also Laurette Sejourné, *Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1976), pp. 56, 78.
- lxiii. Goetz and Morley, *Popol Vuh*, translated by Recinos, [Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950], pp. 78-84, footnote 3; Frey Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson & Charles E. Dibble, Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research, 1963, vol. 10, p. 169; and Paul R. Cheesman, *These Early Americans [1974]*, pp. 42, 53.
- lxiv. Available in Margaret D. Gibson, *Apocrypha Arabica*, London: Clay and Sons, 1901. The *Book of the Rolls* is a pseudepigraphic work known only from an Arabic version, attributed to Clement, a disciple of the apostle Peter. According to John A. Tvedtnes in his research note, "Knowledge of Christ to Come," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 159-161, the *Book of the Rolls* "reflects the same tradition found in other ancient Christian works about the earliest generations of mankind. . . ."
- lxv. Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Vol. 5, pp. 45-46.
- lxvi. Volluz, p. 30.
- lxvii. *Against Heresies* 64.70.5-17.
- lxviii. The parable is also found in other rabbinic works: *Midrash Vayiqra Rabbah* 4:5; *Mekilta de Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai* to Exodus 15:1; *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber 8).
- lxix. Babylonian Talmud *Hagigah* 13a-b. The translation given here is by F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 89.

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- lxx. According to *Abot de Rabbi Nathan* 1, the books of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes were originally considered parables only and became accepted as scripture only after being "interpreted."
- lxxi. *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.5.1, in William Whiston, trans., *The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus* (reprint, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), 305.
- lxxii. John Strugnell and Devorah Dimant, "4QSecond Ezekiel," *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988): 54-58; Devorah Dimant and John Stugnell, "The Merkaba Vision in Second Ezekiel (4Q385 4)," *Revue de Qumran* 14 (1989): 331-48.
- lxxiii. Wilbur R. Jacobs, "The Indian and the Frontier in American History--A Need for Revision" in *Western Historical Quarterly*, January 1973, p. 45.
- lxxiv. Jacobs, "The Indian," p. 46.
- lxxv. Cited in John Collier, *The Indians of the Americas*, pp. 97-98.
- lxxvi. Collier, *The Indians*, p. 97.
- lxxvii. Collier, *The Indians*, p. 98.
- lxxviii. Collier, *The Indians*, p. 98.
- lxxix. Collier, *The Indians*, p. 99.
- lxxx. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity, The Great Century*, vol. 4, p. 323.
- lxxxi. *Church News*, January 22, 1966, p. 16.
- lxxxii. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Trypnone [Dialogue with Trypho]*, Section 2 cited in Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, With a Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 2, p. 752.
- lxxxiii. See The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, p. 234-235. See also John P. Lundy, *Monumental Christianity or the Art of Symbolism of the Primitive Church*, Second Edition, [New York: J. W. Bouton, 1882], p. 73-74.
- lxxxiv. For example, see Vincent Taylor, *Expository Times*, 71, 1960, p. 72; L. Wallis, *The Bible and Modern Belief*, Duke University Press, 1949, p. 32; Father Herbert, *Expository Times*, 72, 1958, p. 33; *The Catholic Bible Quarterly*, 5, 1943, pp. 115-59. Above references are cited in Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (1988) p. 32.
- lxxxv. See W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (Tiibingen: Mohr, 1959), vol. 1, pp. 9, 11-12, 44, 46-47 who refers to Eusebius in *Church History*, vol. 3, p. 24; vol. 5, p. 25. Cited in Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (1988) p. 26-27.
- lxxxvi. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 71-72, in ANF 1:234-235.
- lxxxvii. Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 78, translated by Joseph P. Smith (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1953), ACW 16:97.
- lxxxviii. Daniel-Rops, *L'Eglise des Apotres et des Martyrs*, 313, translated in Barker, *The Divine Church*, 1:16.

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lxxxix. Dionysius of Corinth, quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4:23, in NPNF Series 2, 1:201-202.

xc. See "United States of America," *Funk and Wagnals New Encyclopedia*, [1983], vol. 26, pp. 271-277; and "Industry," *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia* [Compton's New Media, Inc., 1994].

xc. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981). 140-141.

xcii. John C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish traditions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 142. Reeves's translation and commentary on the *Apocalypse of Enosh* comprises chapter 5 of his book.

xciii. For a discussion of records hidden on mountaintops, see "Mountain Repositories," in John A. Tvedtnes, *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books*.

xciv. Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 46, citing the text published in Wilhelm Gesenius, *Carmina Samaritana e codicibus Londinensibus et Gothanis* (Leipzig: imensis Typisque Fr. Chr. Guil. Vogelli, 1824), 40.

xcv. The term "angel of the presence," used in the Bible and other early documents, denotes an angel of superior rank (an archangel) who is allowed to stand in God's presence.

xcvi. See Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 48-49, citing the text published in A. E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 1:31.

xcvii. Westermann 1985:364 (internal verse citations omitted).

xcviii. See Cowley, 1910:214, 342 (Cowley, A.E., ed. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.)

xcix. Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Genesis 22:17; Fox 1983:84.

c. New International Version, in *The NIV Study Bible*, Genesis 22:17.

ci. New American Standard Bible, in *Master Study Bible*, Genesis 22:17.

cii. The Revised English Bible, Genesis 22:17; Vanter 1977:258.

ciii. The New Jerusalem Bible, Genesis 22:17.

civ. See Sarna 1989:154.