

1 Nephi

Chapter 3

1 Nephi 3-5 (**Story of Nephi Obtaining the Brass Plates**):

Noel Reynolds notes that Nephi's story concerning his response to the Lord's command to obtain the brass plates is given prominence by Nephi because it shows that he succeeded where his brothers failed, making him the rightful possessor of the plates of brass. In this episode an angel of the Lord directly informs Laman and Lemuel that Nephi had been chosen to become a ruler over them (1 Nephi 3:29). The story also shows Nephi effectively in that role. Like many other parts of Nephi's account, this story has a chiasmic structure (see illustration below) that emphasizes some of its key points by purposeful repetition. [Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," FARMS, 1987, p. 13]

A Chiastic Analysis of 1 Nephi 3-5	
3:2	A Lehi tells Nephi of the commandment he has received in a dream.
3	B Lehi describes the contents of the plates of brass, mentioning genealogy.
4	C Lehi was commanded that his sons should seek this record.
5	D Laman and Lemuel murmur that it is a hard thing.
7	E Nephi testifies that God will "prepare a way."
8	F Lehi is glad, because he knows Nephi has been "blessed of the Lord."
9-10	G The brothers return to Jerusalem and consult with each other.
11-13	H Laban attempts to slay Laman.
14	I The four are sorrowful; Laman and Lemuel want to return to the wilderness.
15-18	J Nephi's oath "As the Lord liveth and as we live" to keep the commandments of the Lord.
19-21	K Nephi's reasons for getting the plates.
22-23	L The brothers collect Lehi's gold, silver, and precious things.
24-26	M The brothers attempt to buy the plates, but Laban steals their property and attempts to slay them.
27	N They hide in "the cavity of a rock."
28	O Lemuel "hearkens" to Laman; they are angry, speak harsh words, and "smite" Nephi and Sam with a rod.
29	P An angel announces that Nephi has been chosen to be their ruler and promises that the Lord will deliver Laban into their hands.
31	Q Laman and Lemuel murmur again, for who can deliver them from Laban and his fifty?
4:1	Q* Nephi assures his brothers that God is mightier than Laban and his fifty.
2-3	P* Nephi speaks of Moses and reminds them of the angel's promise to deliver Laban into their hands.
4	O* Laman and Lemuel are still angry, they continue to murmur, and they do follow Nephi.
5	N* Nephi hides his brothers outside the city walls.
6-12	M* Nephi is led by the Spirit to find the plates, and the Spirit reminds him of Laban's theft and attempt to kill them; Nephi slays Laban.
20-30	L* Nephi gets the metal plates with Zoram's assistance.
12-19 ⁴⁴	K* The Spirit's reasons for Nephi to kill Laban.
31-34	J* Nephi's oath again "As the Lord liveth and as I live" used to urge Zoram to join them in following Lehi.
5:2-3	I* Sariah is sorrowful and wishes to be back in Jerusalem.
4:35-38	H* Nephi spares Zoram's life.
5:4-6	G* Lehi comforts Sariah as their sons travel up to Jerusalem.
7	F* Sariah is gladdened by her sons' return as the Lord has delivered them.
8	E* Sariah testifies that God has accomplished this, using Nephi's very words.
9	D* Lehi and Sariah rejoice and offer sacrifices and thanks to God.
10	C* Lehi searches the record.
11-19	B* Lehi summarizes the prophecies and genealogies in the plates of brass.
20-21	A* Lehi and Nephi had kept all the Lord's commandments to them.

1 Nephi 3-5 (**Story of Nephi obtaining the brass plates**) [Illustration]: "A Chiastic Analysis of 1 Nephi 3-5" [Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," FARMS, 1987, p. 14 Note* On verses 12-19 this element of the chiasm is advanced one position in the text because of chronology, but the structural parallel is easy to recognize.]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Laban Hath the Record of the Jews and Also a Genealogy of Thy Forefathers:**

Verneil Simmons explains that "Laban" (1 Nephi 3:3) was apparently well known to Lehi and his family as an official in Jerusalem. He is described later by Nephi as a military man, in

possible command of "tens of thousands" (1 Nephi 4:1). He could well have been chief over all the armies of Judah, as well as commander of the "fifty" which guarded Jerusalem. Judah's military forces were organized into "thousands," "hundreds," "fifties," and "tens," according to writers of the biblical record (I Samuel 10:19, II Chronicles 25:5, II Kings 1:9). . . . If Laban was the commander in charge of the royal guard and the defense of Jerusalem, then he was a man of much importance and his lodging would have been close to the palace, or a part of it, and near the Temple. When Nephi spoke of the "treasury" of Laban (1 Nephi 4:20) he was probably telling us that Laban was the person responsible for the guarding of the treasury of the king. Private citizens did not maintain a treasury. Such rooms were attached to the palace and to the Temple, where official documents were stored, along with the wealth of gold, silver, and bronze vessels, precious stones, and other riches. A royal officer was in charge of these possessions of the king. Many such rooms have been excavated in the ancient cities of the Near East (See *Interpreters's Dictionary of the Bible*, Treasury c. royal, p. 694. A steward could be the overseer of the treasury. (See Ezra 5:17 regarding the king's treasure house).

[Verneil W. Simmons, *Peoples, Places and Prophecies*, p. 67] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 3:12]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Laban:**

According to an article by Gordon C. Thomasson, in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, Laban is a scheming kinsman who denies relatives property that is rightfully theirs, causes them to flee from his presence, exploits their resources, mounts punitive expeditions against them, and finally must be overcome, by almost any means. This might be an instance of metonymic naming. Metonymy or metonymic naming involves "naming by association," a metaphoric process of linking two concepts or persons together in such a way as to tell us more about the latter by means of what we already know about the former. . . . For example, while David was in flight, he sought food from a man the biblical text names as *Nabal*, (which means "fool"). It stretches credibility to believe that a man, as an affluent adult Israelite, would carry with him the name of *Mr. Fool*. But that is his name, according to the text, and his actions are indeed foolish--refusing food to the anointed king and consistently successful warrior, David (1 Samuel 25:25). *Nabal* is, I believe, a clear example of inspired editorial, after-the-fact metonymic naming in the Old Testament. . . . It is also worthy of note, as John Tvedtnes has mentioned, that *Laban* is *Nabal* backwards, and that such word-plays . . . are typical of Hebrew naming.

[Gordon C. Thomasson, "What's in a Name? Book of Mormon Language, Names, and [Metonymic] Naming" in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Spring 1994, F.A.R.M.S., p. 15]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Laban Hath *THE* Record of the Jews:**

Verneil Simmons explains that the reference in 1 Nephi 3:3 is to "the" record of the

Jews, not "a" record, though there must have been other copies not on metal. The fact that this history was engraved on metal plates and in part, at least, written in the Egyptian language strongly suggests that these brass plates could be the original book begun by Moses. If so, it is possible that the record had finally become an object of veneration, not of use.

[Verneil W. Simmons, Peoples, Places and Prophecies, p. 72]

Note* Perhaps just like the responsibilities of Nephi, part of Moses' goals in returning to Egypt involved retrieving a record of Joseph (the plates of brass?). [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]
[See the commentary on Mosiah 1:4; see also 2 Nephi 3:12]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Laban Hath the Record of the Jews:**

According to Verneil Simmons, when the ark was removed from the tent where David had housed it and placed in the innermost room of the new and splendid "house of the Lord," it was written that there was nothing in the Ark except the two stone tablets. The book of the law or covenant, written by Moses, was no longer there (I Kings 8:9).

In 1896, an ancient scroll was found in a synagogue in Old Cairo, Egypt. It consisted of portions of two separate manuscripts, one of some eight pages and another of only one page. They were translated and published in 1910 under the title *The Damascus Document*. It was recognized even then that this must have been a copy of writings made centuries before by a group of Zadokite Jews living in Damascus. These fragments date from about the tenth to twelfth century. Not much was done with the scroll until the discovery of the Qumran or Dead Sea Scrolls. Among the writings of the Qumran community were several fragments from the Damascus Document. (Thus its age was confirmed. The original had been written before the birth of Christ.)

An interesting story is told in this scroll, as published by the French writer A. Dupont-Sommer. The translation is his:

As for David, he did not read the sealed book of the law which was in the ark [of the covenant]. For it was not opened in Israel from the day that Eleazar and Joshua and the Elders died, when [the children of Israel] began to serve Ashtoreth; and it remained hidden [and] was [not] revealed until the coming of Zadok.

The author adds this comment:

After the death of Joshua and Eleazar and the Elders of their generation, the children of Israel abandoned Yahweh to serve Baal and Astarte [Ashtoreth] (Joshua 24:29-31; Judges 2:7-10, 13). During the time of apostasy, the "sealed book of the Law" remained hidden "until the coming of Zadok." This Zadok seems to be the priest Zadok who lived in the time of David. It was he who, supplanting the priest Abiathar, anointed Solomon just before David's death. According to the present passage, this Zadok made known

again the authentic text of the Law; this praise of his rule is an interesting feature.ⁱ

If the scroll of the Damascus Document is correct, then that book had been removed in the days of Zadok and its contents made known. It is interesting that David referred to Zadok as a *seer* (II Samuel 15:27).

If Zadok did remove a book from the Ark before it was carried into the Holy of Holies in the new Temple, and if the book was the record later known as the Brass Plates, then to whom was it given? We find a possible answer in II Samuel 8:16. In the account dealing with David's organization of the kingdom, we find the name of the recorder (in charge of the royal chronicles and annals) mentioned in the same verse with the name of the commander of the "host" or army.

The recorder was a royal officer with a high position at the royal court; even that of an adviser to the king. Both he and the commander of the "host" were attached to the palace and probably housed in or near it. Certainly the historian of the acts of the king had to be closely associated with the commander of the armies, since all the kings of Judah and Israel were constantly embroiled in petty wars or raids on their neighbors.

Was this custom still in force in the days of Laban? It would appear so. We find Laban commanding the armies and also acting as guardian of the record which is in the treasury (1 Nephi 3). The recorder being a court officer strengthens the idea that the record was actually in the palace treasury. The evidence is inconclusive but it does suggest a route by which the record of Moses could have reached the care of Laban.

[Verneil W. Simmons, Peoples, Places and Prophecies, pp. 248-250] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 3:12]

1 Nephi 3:3 **For Behold, Laban Hath *the Record of the Jews*:**

In 1 Nephi 3:2-3 we find:

And it came to pass that [Lehi] spake unto [Nephi] saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.

For behold, *Laban hath the record of the Jews* and also a genealogy of thy forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.

Some might think that the term "Jews" only refers to those of the tribe of Judah, however by the time of Lehi and Nephi, the Northern Kingdom had fallen and, according to modern research, some remnants of those ten tribes had fled to the Southern Kingdom, settling in and around Jerusalem as "Jews." Some also might mistakenly assume that the phrase "record

of the Jews" could only mean a record which was but a partial rendering of what has come to be the Old Testament, however both the Book of Mormon and modern research speak to the contrary.

In a vision concerning the coming forth of the Bible, Nephi notes that an angel said to him concerning the Bible that, "it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, *save there are not so many*" (1 Nephi 3:23, emphasis added). That is, the brass plates contained much more text than the present Old Testament.

Additionally, according to John Sorenson, one of the notable intellectual activities of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been the development of the view that the Old Testament was a composite of ancient documents of varied age and source. But while the view that the Old Testament did not derive from a single original source seemed to hold up over time, the scholars found that many of their early conclusions about the evolution of such sources were untenable. For example, the Dead Sea Scrolls showed that the ancient sources of the Old Testament were far more complex than was allowed in the evolutionism of the older critics.ⁱⁱ In the words of H. D. Hummel:

In all likelihood, the original tradition was richer than any of its three major later derivatives (the Septuagint, Samaritan and Masoretic texts) . . . it now seems likely that [our present] text has suffered more from losses than from glosses.ⁱⁱⁱ

In a review of Sorenson's article (see Grant, "The Brass Plates and Their Prophets") Richard Grant notes that according to the current scholarly view, the Old Testament in its present form is considered to be drawn from the work of four major strands or traditions of Hebrew narration, each with its own agenda. These are identified as the Jehovist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomists, and the Priestly writers, usually referred to by the shorthand, *J, E, D, and P*. Briefly, these traditions each represent a different view of Hebrew history, each written to achieve a specific objective of the author or authors.

1. The *Jehovist*: referred to God as *Jehovah*. This was predominantly of Judah, declaring the divine authority of the King, the temple, and the priesthood.

2. The *Elohist*: referred to God as *Elohim*. This history emphasized the role of the individual rather than the priest. Its heroes were Jacob and Joseph.

3. The *Deuteronomists*: This is believed to be the book claimed to be "found" in the temple by the priests of Josiah. It's believed to have been written by these priests or perhaps by Jeremiah, to reinforce the teachings of the prophets of that today. But the influence and editing extended far beyond the Book of Deuteronomy.

4. The *Priestly* writers: Written during the Babylonian captivity to give the captives a strong sense of unique identity. "They did it primarily by asserting the power of the religious

tradition of the Jews over the total life of the people. In the process they also edited and rewrite massive parts of their sacred history."

Sorenson notes that the preferences in deity names between J and E sources have been demonstrated to be consistent and significant, not mere literary quirks.^{iv} They reflect different traditions transmitted through regionally distinct "schools" of scribes which existed from the tenth century onward.^v E source was fundamentally a Northern Kingdom expression. Albright noted that differences between J and E already existed in the Pentateuchal poems dating between Exodus and the Monarchy, thus the later "schools" and a prior basis.^{vi} Cassuto's observation also may be related. He noted that in Old Testament situations where God is represented as a universal or international deity, rather than as God of Israel, an El name occurs. For example, in all the sections of Genesis pertaining to Egypt, including the entire story of Joseph, El names are used exclusively.^{vii} Note also should be taken that D&C 84:6-13 asserts a line of priesthood and sacred knowledge persisted in the desert from the time of Esaias, a contemporary and associate of Abraham, at least until Moses and Jethro [Moses' father-in-law who lived at Midian, which was the region by the shores of the Red Sea to which Lehi fled (the Valley of Lemuel) and to which the camp of Israel went after crossing the Red Sea]. Jethro is an E name, in contrast to J's Hobab; of course Jethro's father was Reu'El.^{viii}

Details not mentioned above further evidence possible E effects on the Book of Mormon, either through the brass plates or through the family tradition in which Lehi was reared:

(1) The Book of Mormon virtually ignores the Davidic covenant, which is a J element. David is mentioned but six times (twice only incidentally in quotations from Isaiah). Two instances involved strong condemnation of David. (see Jacob 1:15, 2:23-24, 31-33)

(2) Instead, considerable attention is paid to the Abrahamic covenant and to the patriarchs. All 29 references to Abraham are laudatory. Jacob is also so named, a positive E characteristic, whereas J uses "Israel" as his personal name.^{ix} (On the covenant with Abraham, see 1 Nephi 15:18, 17:40; 2 Nephi 29:14.)

(3) The Jews, particularly the inhabitants of Jerusalem, are branded as evil in the strongest terms. (For example, 1 Nephi 1:19, 17:42-44.)

(4) Emphasis is placed on Joseph being sold into Egypt, his saving Jacob's house, and the Lord's special covenant with Joseph which is not attested in the Old Testament (1 Nephi 5:14-15, 17-40; 2 Nephi 3:4-5, 9-10, 16-17; 4:1-3; 10:3). The coat of Joseph is a topic specific to E on which the Book of Mormon adds data not found in the Jewish version (J).^x

(5) The name "Jehovah" (Yahweh), the preferred J title of deity, occurs only twice in the Book of Mormon (once a quote from Isaiah 12--with one word changed--and again in the very

last sentence in the volume). The name "Lord" is usually used for divinity in the Book of Mormon (almost 1400 times).^{xi}

(6) Unmistakable El (E source) names do occur in the Book of Mormon, notably "Most High God" (Hebrew "El Elyon") and "Almighty God" (the Septuagint's term for "El Shaddai"),^{xii} the former six times and the latter eleven.

In addition to these points, other characteristics of E of more generic nature are found in the Book of Mormon.

[John L. Sorenson, "The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship," in Nephite Culture and Society, pp. 26-39; see also Richard G. Grant, "The Brass Plates and Their Prophets," <http://www.cometozarahemla.org/brassplates/brass-plates.html>] [For further information on the brass plates, see the commentaries on 1 Nephi 5:11, 5:16, 13:23, 19:22; 2 Nephi 2:17, 2:25, 3:18-19; Mosiah 1:3-4; Alma 37:4-5; 3 Nephi 10:16; Moroni 10:34]

1 Nephi 3:3 **They Are Engraven upon Plates of Brass:**

William Hamblin notes that in the past, critics of the Book of Mormon have attacked the alleged absurdity of the Book of Mormon having been written on golden plates and its claim of the existence of an early sixth-century-B.C. version of the Hebrew Bible written on brass plates.^{xiii} Today, however, critics almost universally admit that there are numerous examples of ancient writing on metal plates. Ironically, some critics now claim instead that knowledge of such plates was readily available in Joseph Smith's day. Hugh Nibley's 1952 observation seems quite prescient: "It will not be long before men forget that in Joseph Smith's day the prophet was mocked and derided for his description of the plates more than anything else."^{xiv}

Walter Burkert, in his recent study of the cultural dependence of Greek civilization on the ancient Near East, refers to the transmission of the practice of writing on bronze plates (Semitic root *dlt*) from the Phoenicians to the Greeks. "The reference to 'bronze *deltoi* [plates, from *dlt*]' as a term [among the Greeks] for ancient sacral laws should point back to the seventh or sixth century [B.C.]" as the period in which the terminology and the practice of writing on bronze plates was transmitted from the Phoenicians to the Greeks.^{xv}



Gold Tablet From Persepolis

ldsdoctrine.blogspot.com

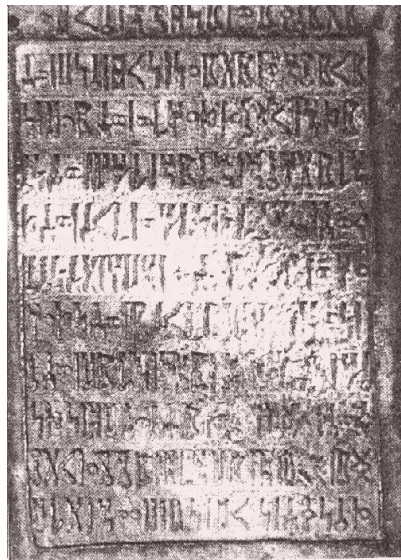
Found by archaeologists in 1938 near Shiraz, Iran

Students of the Book of Mormon will note that this is precisely the time and place in which the Book of Mormon claims that there existed similar bronze plates which contained the "ancient sacred laws" of the Hebrews, the close cultural cousins of the Phoenicians.

[William J. Hamblin, "Metal Plates and the Book of Mormon," in Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., 1999, p. 20]



1 Nephi 3:3 **Plates of brass (Illustration):** Gold Tablets from Palace of Darius. One of the gold tablets from the Palace of Darius discovered in Iran in 1933. They date from about 500 B.C.--near the time of Nephi. The Empire of Darius included Nephi's homeland. [Milton Hunter and Stuart Ferguson, Ancient America and the Book of Mormon, p. 101]



1 Nephi 3:3 **Plates of brass (Illustration):** Cast brass plates on display in the National Museum, Sana'a dating to about A.D. 400. [Warren and Michaela Aston, In the Footsteps of Lehi, p. 9]



The Gold Plates of Darius

templestudy.com

1 Nephi 3:3 **Plates of brass (Illustration – not shown):** Records of Darius in solid gold and silver bearing an inscription in three languages--Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian. The plates date from about 518-515 B.C. and were found at Persepolis, Iran. By permission of The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. [Franklin S. Harris, Jr., The Book of Mormon Message and Evidences, p. 4]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Brass:**

In the ancient Near East (Lehi's world), when it became extremely important to keep a record, they kept it on metal such as copper alloy, referred to as "brass" in the Bible. You won't find the word "bronze" in the Bible at all, though the Old Testament is a Bronze Age document (that being the alloy most probably made and referred to). In Joseph Smith's time they didn't use the word "bronze" at all. The main thing to keep in mind, however, is that the metal referred to was copper based.

According to Hugh Nibley, one good example of an ancient copper alloy record is the *Copper Scroll*. The *Copper Scroll* was found at Cave Three (at Qumran) in 1949.



Copper Scroll Dead Sea

ancient-origins.net

John Allegro wrote a book on them called *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll*. There's also an article by Norman Golb from 1987. Although they are referred to as a "scroll," they weren't on rolled (scroll-like) copper, they were originally on sheets--regular size sheets. There were holes along the side [apparently for some sort of binding ring], but they riveted them together so that they could roll them up. The reason they put the records on copper was so they wouldn't perish because (as Golb tells us in his article) they were extra valuable. They had to be preserved, so they put them on bronze or copper (almost pure copper; it's a slight alloy). [Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 137]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Brass (Illustration – not shown):** The Copper Scrolls. [Hugh Nibley, Since Cumorah, p. 246]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Brass:**

According to Cleon Skousen, technically brass consists of two parts of copper and one of zinc. However, this was such a rare phenomenon in ancient times that many authorities believe the word "brass" (see 1 Nephi 3:3) refers to copper or copper and tin which we call bronze (a modern term). This conclusion is supported by passages such as Deuteronomy 8:9, which speaks of *digging* "brass." Authorities feel this could only mean copper. The ancients learned how to combine tin with copper and then harden it or make it extremely flexible as desired. This art of the "bronze age" is completely lost to modern man. (See Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*, under "brass.") [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1036]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Plates of Brass:**

Some have argued that the description of brass in the Book of Mormon is an anachronism. However, the same term is used in the Bible as early as Genesis 4:22. Both descriptions probably describe a copper alloy which is different than the current definition. Brass is an alloy of copper and nickel. Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin. The latter was much more common in Old Testament times, but by the 17th and 18th centuries, the word "bronze" was not yet in common usage.

Hugh Nibley writes:

"When we see brass in the Old Testament, are we supposed to read bronze? Answer: Well, you can read bronze. They did have brass, the alloy of copper and nickel, but, of course, copper and tin was much commoner. The word bronze doesn't occur in the King James Bible at all because it wasn't used until the 1880s. It wasn't an English word at all; it was a French word. We use brass which means bronze.... In Joseph Smith's time they didn't use the word bronze at all. That was a word for artists in Paris to use, and it was a new thing." (Teachings of the Book of Mormon, lecture 10, p. 141)

[josephsmith.com.1nephi]

1 Nephi 3:3 **Plates of Brass:**

A good example of an Hebraism is found in 1 Nephi 3:3 with the phrase "plates of brass." John A. Tvedtnes explains that the Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon help persuade us that it is authentic. . . . When English shows a possessive or descriptive relationship between two nouns, it usually puts the possessive or descriptive noun first: *the king's house or wood house*. Hebrew, however, uses the opposite order: *house the king* (which would usually be translated *house of the king*). . . . If the Hebrew word order is kept in the English translation, the word *of* must be added, even though it does not exist in the Hebrew. [John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon" in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., p. 79]

1 Nephi 3:7 **I Know:**

When Nephi uses the words "I know," he might be conveying more than simple faith or a positive attitude. He might be conveying a more sure knowledge of a covenant relationship with the Lord which he had previously alluded to in 1 Nephi 2. In that brief mention, notice that:

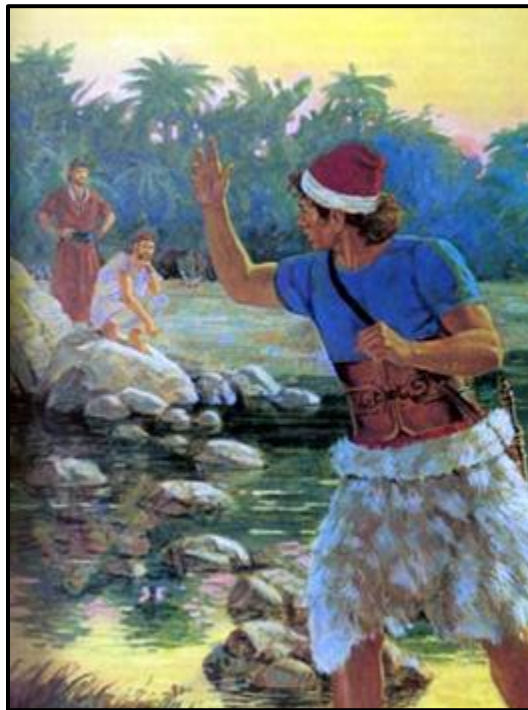
(1) Nephi "was exceedingly young yet large in stature" (implying spiritual maturity more than physical)

(2) he had "great desires to know of the *mysteries* of God, wherefore he did cry unto the Lord,"

(3) "he [the Lord] *did visit me*," and

(4) "I did not rebel" (1 Nephi 2:16, emphasis added)

For the Lord's part, he blesses Nephi according to his obedience to the covenant: "And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands." . . . "And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren." (1 Nephi 2:20. 22) Note should be taken of the specific covenant words and phrases here. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:2, 5:5; 2 Nephi 33:4; Alma 34:8; 3 Nephi 14:23]



1 Nephi 3:7 **I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded (Illustration):** Nephi Returning for the Plates of Brass. "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded." Artist: Robert T. Barrett. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 9]

1 Nephi 3:9 I . . . and My Brethren:

In Biblical Hebrew, the person speaking ("I") always comes first in a compound subject (compare Alma 15:15, "I and my brethren will go forth into the land of Zarahemla"; and 1 Kings 1:21, "I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders"). [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 8]

1 Nephi 3:9 I, Nephi, and My Brethren Took Our Journey in the Wilderness . . . to Go up to the Land of Jerusalem:

Kelly Ogden writes that he and accompanying friends learned by walking the distance that between Jerusalem and the Red Sea is about 200 miles. He notes that some authors insert a figure of 150 miles or so, "as the crow flies," but ancient Judahites were not crows and they didn't fly, and it was 200 miles to the Red Sea! An agreeable pace for a group of people on camels would be between twenty and thirty miles a day. So the journey was a minimum of seven or eight days. Add to that the three days they traveled after reaching the Red Sea, and the figures are up to 260-290 miles in ten or eleven days. That is one direction only. The round-trip that the Lord and father Lehi were asking of the four sons was over 500 miles and at least three weeks through some of the most rugged terrain in the Near East! And they had no clue as to how they were going to obtain the plates. And we, having the advantage of "knowing the end from the beginning" are amazed to think ahead and realize that Lehi, soon after his sons returned from their first assignment, would command them to go back again! That is over a thousand miles and many weeks on those desolate tracts of land--and we have often looked down on Laman and Lemuel for being chronic complainers.

[D. Kelly Ogden, "Answering the Lord's Call," in Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon, Part 1, pp. 26-27]

1 Nephi 3:9 Up [and Down]:

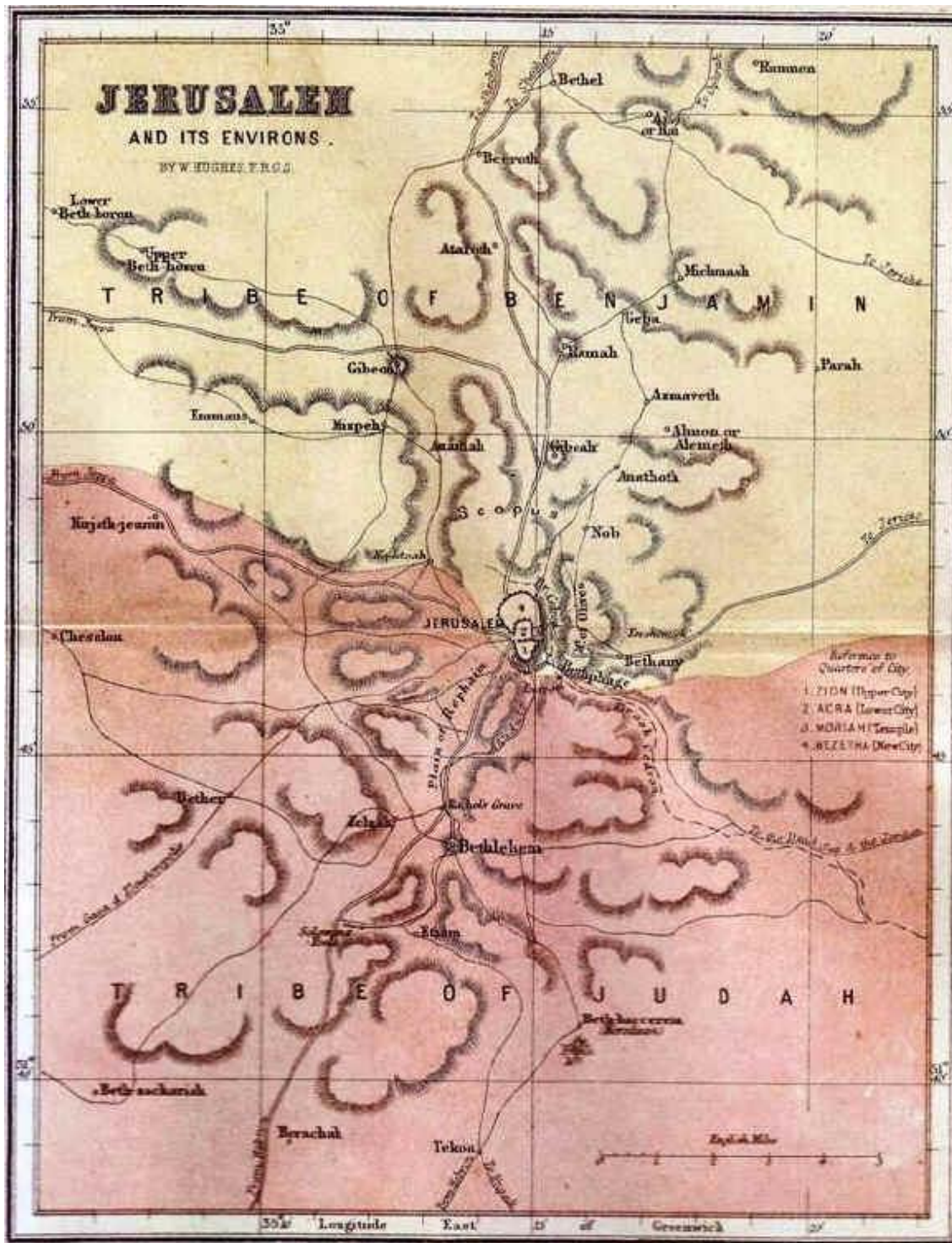
Nephi uses the terms "up" and "down" in a consistent pattern. One notes that the movement from the Valley of Lemuel to Jerusalem is always "up" (1 Nephi 3:9, 3:23, 7:4, etc.) and the movement from Jerusalem to the Valley of Lemuel is always "down" (see 1 Nephi 2:5, 7:2, 7:22, etc.). Because we know the topography of the Old World, we know that these terms are correct in reference to elevation. Can we assume that "up" and "down" refer always to elevation, even in the New World? I will assume as much. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

Geographical Theory Map : 1 Nephi 3:9 Nephi Goes Up to Jerusalem After the Plates of Laban

1 Nephi 3:9 **The Land of Jerusalem:**

According to Hugh Nibley, when we speak of Jerusalem, it is important to notice Nephi's preference for a non-Biblical expression, "the land of Jerusalem" (1 Nephi 3:9) in designating his homeland. While he and his brothers always regard "the land of Jerusalem" as their home, it is perfectly clear from a number of passages that "the land of our father's inheritance" cannot possibly be within, or even very near, the city, even though Lehi had "dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days" (1 Nephi 1:4). The terms seem confused, but they correctly reflect actual conditions, for in the Amarna letters we read of "the land of Jerusalem" as an area larger than the city itself, and even learn in one instance that "a city of the land of Jerusalem, Bet-Ninib, has been captured." It was the rule in Palestine and Syria, as the same letters show, for a large area around a city and all the inhabitants of that area to bear the name of the city. . . .

This arrangement deserves mention because many have pointed to the statement of Alma 7:10 that the Savior would be born "at Jerusalem which is the *land* of our forefathers," as sure proof of fraud. It is rather the opposite, faithfully preserving the ancient terminology to describe a system which has only been recently rediscovered. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 6-7]



womeninthebible.net

1 Nephi 3:9 **The land of Jerusalem (Illustration - not shown):** The "land of Jerusalem" took in a much larger area than the city Jerusalem, including this place a few miles to the south at Bethlehem. [Scot and Maurine Proctor, *Light from the Dust*, p. 14]

1 Nephi 3:10 **I and My Brethren Did Consult:**

Angela Crowell asserts that in Biblical Hebrew, when the compound subject consists of different persons, the first person (the person speaking) precedes any others (Davidson 1950:159). In proper English usage, the order is reversed: the speaker always comes last. We say, "My father and I" instead of "I and my father," as in Hebrew. This phenomenon in Hebrew is a literal translation, i.e., "I" is written in Hebrew before "and my father." A good example of this is found in 1 Nephi 3:10, "I and my brethren did consult . . ."

[Angela M. Crowell, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," in Recent Book of Mormon Developments, Vol. 2, p. 6]

1 Nephi 3:11 **We Cast Lots:**

The practice of casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament. In spite of the many references to casting lots in the Old Testament, nothing is known about the actual lots themselves. They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice; but their exact nature is unknown.



Casting Lots???

thoughtfulspot.typepad.com

The practice of casting lots occurs most often in connection with the division of the land under Joshua (Joshua chapters 14-21), a procedure that God instructed the Israelites on several times in the book of Numbers (Numbers 26:55; 33:54; 34:13; 36:2). God allowed the Israelites to cast lots in order to determine His will for a given situation (Joshua 18:6-10; 1 Chronicles 24:5,31). Various offices and functions in the temple were also determined by lot (1 Chronicles 24:5, 31; 25:8-9; 26:13-14). The sailors on Jonah's ship (Jonah 1:7) also cast lots to determine who had brought God's wrath upon their ship. The eleven apostles cast lots to determine who would replace Judas (Acts 1:26). Casting lots eventually became a game people played and made wagers on. This is seen in the Roman soldiers casting lots for Jesus' garments (Matthew 27:35).

<http://www.gotquestions.org/casting-lots>

1 Nephi 3:11 **We Cast Lots:**

Daniel Ludlow attests that the "casting of lots" as mentioned by Nephi (see 1 Nephi 3:11) was practiced extensively by the Hebrews of Old Testament times. This authentic and typical use of the custom in the Book of Mormon would indicate again that this part of the story in the Book of Mormon is concerned with a group of people with a Hebrew background and that the Book of Mormon is a translation of an ancient record. (If you want to review some of the examples in the Bible where the casting of lots was used, see Leviticus 16:8; 1 Samuel 14:42; 1 Chronicles 26:13; Psalms 22:18; Isaiah 34:17; Joel 3:3; Obadiah 11; Jonah 1:7; Nahum 3:10; Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 19:24; Acts 1:26)

[Daniel Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 95]

1 Nephi 3:11 **And We Cast Lots . . . the Lot Fell upon Laman:**

According to Brant Gardner, the use of lots to determine who should go up to Laban now raises another question. If the Lord did have a hand in the selection, why was Laman chosen instead of Nephi? Clearly the Lord knew that Nephi would be the successful one. . . . Why would the Lord put Laman in a position where the Lord *knew* he would fail?

The incident of the retrieval of the brass plates comes directly after Nephi's epiphany wherein the Lord told Nephi that he would ascend over his brothers. While that had occurred in other historical occasions (Jacob over Esau, Joseph over all his brethren) it was remarkable in its violation of cultural rules. For the eldest brother was the one who *should* have that role.

The incident with the brass plates is a transitional moment where the change in the leadership hierarchies is being established. The Lord uses this incident to provide justification for the ascendancy of Nephi as a leader, a process which continues on their journey through the desert. Laman's attempt and failure was both a recognition of his birthright, and the marking of

the passage of the birthright from the inheritor to the more righteous anointed.
[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, Book of Mormon Commentary,
<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStoics/1Nephi/1Nephi3.htm>, pp. 4-5]

Note* From another perspective, the fact that Laman was chosen is symbolic of the ways of the world. In other words, by the natural law of inheritance at the time, Laman would have been the rightful heir and the natural person to represent the family of Lehi. The reader should note, however, that the birthright we should be focusing on is the *covenant* birthright, which is bestowed by the Lord and also is based on *covenant* obedience. Nephi was more than just good or righteous, he had personally covenanted with the Lord and was being faithful to that covenant (see 1 Nephi 2:16-24). Laman failed to be obedient to those covenant obligations;
[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 3:13 **Thou Art a Robber:**

According to an article by John W. Welch, it turns out that there was a big difference under the law of Moses, and in ancient Near Eastern criminal law generally, between being a "thief" and being a "robber." A "thief" was an inside member of the community; he usually worked alone, he stole things like chickens at night. A thief's offense was not serious, and he was punished lightly, usually being required to return that which he had stolen and then doubling it. A "robber" on the other hand was an outsider, literally an outlaw, living outside the community and outside the protection of the local law. Robbers hid out in the hills, in bands, swearing oaths of secrecy, swooping down on villages, openly assassinating and plundering. Robbers were one of the greatest scourges of ancient civilization; sometimes in Egypt they occupied whole cities. Soldiers were sent out after them, and when they were caught, they were put to death on the spot--no trial was necessary. . . .

Now we can also better understand why Laman was so frightened by Laban's threat. When Laman tried to obtain the plates of brass, you recall, Laban threw him out, saying, "Thou art a robber, and I will slay thee" (1 Nephi 3:13). Indeed, Laban was a military officer. And even though Laman clearly was not a robber, if Laban chose to characterize him as such, Laban had the power to put some real teeth into his threat. Of course, if the text had said, "Thou art a thief, and I will slay thee," it wouldn't have sounded quite right. But that too is a telling point, for there is little substantive distinction between "theft" and "robbery" in Anglo-American law; nor could Joseph have learned the ancient distinction from his Bible, for the translators of the King James Version use these two words indiscriminately and interchangeably. For example, in the story of the Good Samaritan, the King James Version says that a man went down from Jerusalem and fell among "thieves" (Luke 10:30). Of course, you do not fall among "thieves" out in the desert, but among "robbers," which is how the Greek reads. Unlike the King James Version, however, the Book of Mormon uses these two terms correctly.

[John W. Welch, "Study and Faith & The Book of Mormon" in BYU Today, September 1988, p. 21]

1 Nephi 3:13 **Thou Art a Robber and I Will Slay Thee:**

Brock Lennox notes that while on the Lord's errand to retrieve the brass plates, Nephi and his brethren initially confronted Laban with Laman as their spokesman. When Laman told Laban what they had come for, Laban became angry and threw him out from his presence, saying: "Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee" (1 Nephi 3:13). In this circumstance the reader should note that while no robbery actually took place, Laban makes a decree which would foreshadow judgement and punishment concerning his own actions.

It seems apparent that Laban had sufficient authority at the time to decree penalties which were carried out in the larger political system of Jerusalem. While a decree of death for a robber might or might not have been justified under that larger political system, Laban's demand for this strict penalty at least represented a case of judgement according to Laban's own personal standard.

As the narrative will relate, Nephi and his brethren would return to Laban a second time bearing great personal wealth as an exchange for the plates. This wealth was probably far in excess of the value of the plates even according to Laban's worldly perspective, for upon seeing their gold and silver and precious things Laban "did lust after it, insomuch that he thrust [them] out, and sent his servants to slay [them] that he might obtain [their] property" (1 Nephi 3:25).

Thus Laban will prove to be the very robber he had accused the sons of Lehi of being. He rejected the Lord's covenant servant in order to seek after the idolatrous god of earthly riches. Ironically, he would soon receive the very judgement he had decreed--death. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2:1) "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee thou wicked servant" (Luke 19:22). "The same judgement which ye judge ye shall also be judged" (Moroni 7:18). [J. Brock Lennox, "Analysis of Laban's Refusals to Part with the Plates," unpublished paper]

1 Nephi 3:14 **We Began to Be Exceedingly Sorrowful:**

In 1 Nephi 3:14 Nephi writes that after Laman failed in his attempt to retrieve the plates of brass from Laban, "We began to be exceedingly sorrowful, and my brethren were about to return unto my father in the wilderness. Brant Gardner notes that Nephi includes himself in those who were "exceedingly sorrowful" but clearly removes himself from those who would abandon the journey and return. [Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1 Nephi/1 Nephi3.htm>, p. 8]

1 Nephi 3:15 **As the Lord Liveth, and As We Live:**

When Nephi's brethren were about to return to their father after Laman's failed attempt to retrieve the plates of brass, Nephi spoke unto them with an oath: "As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us" (1 Nephi 3:15).

According to Brant Gardner, it is very likely that Nephi's brethren knew nothing at this time about Nephi's past vision, and the promise to Nephi that he would rule over them. It is also quite unlikely that the brothers knew of Nephi's impassioned vow to Lehi that he knew that the Lord would prepare the way for them. Nephi's oath ("As the Lord liveth, and as we live") was a powerful commitment. Smith's Bible Dictionary presents the following information on oath-taking:

The principle on which an oath is held to be binding is incidentally laid down in Hebrews 6:16 as an ultimate appeal to divine authority to ratify an assertion. There the Almighty is represented as promising or denouncing with an oath, i.e. doing so in the most positive and solemn manner. On the same principle, that oath has always been held most binding which appealed to the highest authority, both as regards individuals and communities. As a consequence of this principle, appeals to God's name on the one hand, and to heathen deities on the other, are treated in scripture as tests of allegiance. ("Oath," in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Fleming H. Revell Company, 1970, p. 462)

Thus by invoking the name of the Lord, Nephi is binding himself with the strongest of oaths. His subsequent arguments serve to convince his brethren to accompany him. There is no record that the brothers repeated the oath, even though they did participate one more time. [Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page," <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi3.htm>, pp. 8-9]

Note* Notice how Nephi is willing to give all he possesses, the very finest (symbolically represented by gold and silver) in order to keep his covenant with the Lord. Notice also how here in 1 Nephi 3:15 he repeats phrasing similar to that of 1 Nephi 3:7 in his covenant oath: "until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded". Perhaps that original phrasing in 1 Nephi 3:7 was covenant related to begin with (see 1 Nephi 2:16-24). [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 3:16 **Let Us Go down to the Land of Our Father's Inheritance:**

Keith Christensen postulates that history and geography might tell us where Lehi's "land of inheritance" (1 Nephi 3:16) was located. The story of Lehi begins in the first year of the reign

of the Jewish king, Zedekiah. Shortly before this, Egypt tried to assert itself in the region. At that time Babylon was expanding its empire from the east. So by the start of Zedekiah's reign, Judah was encircled by Egyptian and Babylonian forces except to the south. Babylon's vassal ally, Edom, was to the southeast. There is no indication of Lehi's journey (or Lehi's sons return to their father's land of inheritance) being contested. It was only to the south that the land was generally secure. This favors Lehi's land of inheritance being in that direction.

Geographically, Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, stood at an elevation of 2593 feet. It was guarded on two sides by deep valleys. To go either east or west of Jerusalem, Lehi's sons would have had to have gone up over the mountains that formed these valleys. The land north of Jerusalem was generally higher than the rest of Judah. To the east beyond the heights on that side, the terrain of course goes down, but to the Dead Sea and the Wilderness of Judah, unlikely places for a land of inheritance. To the west of Jerusalem, beyond the heights that formed the valley on that side, the land slopes toward the Mediterranean, but Egyptian and Babylonian armies in that direction would have precluded the land of inheritance being there. It seems that the only possible direction from Jerusalem to Lehi's land of inheritance would have been south.

Beersheba was the southernmost district in King David's kingdom and referred to as "the Negeb of Judah." King Solomon paid particular attention to the Negeb, constructing a network of small forts to protect the caravan routes and establishing agricultural settlements. . . . About 20 to 30 miles south of Beersheba, there began a region that the Bible calls the Wilderness of Zin (Numbers 13:21; 20:1; 27:14; Deuteronomy 32:51; Joshua 15:1,3) and beyond that was the Wilderness of Paran (Genesis 21:21; Numbers 10:12; Deuteronomy 1:1; I Samuel 25:1; I Kings 11:18). . . .

Thus, there would have been a frontier melding into the wilderness to identify where it could be said that Lehi "departed into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 2:5) and from where to measure the three days of travel specified in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 2:6). This frontier was about 100 miles from the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba and is consistent with that reference to a three day's journey.

[B. Keith Christensen, The Unknown Witness, pp. 46,53-55,227, unpublished]

1 Nephi 3:16 Let Us Go Down to the Land of Our Father's Inheritance:

According to Jeffrey Chadwick, while the text specifies that Lehi "dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days" (1 Nephi 1:4) and had "his own house at Jerusalem" (1 Nephi 1:7), apparently the bulk of his fortune reposed at his "land of inheritance" because Lehi "knew that Jerusalem must be destroyed because of the wickedness of the people" (1 Nephi 3:16-17). This land of inheritance was apparently some distance from the "land of Jerusalem (1 Nephi 3:1,9,11,16,22-23).

Based on archaeological, geographical, and historical evidence accumulated from the study of the old tribal areas of Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah and Jerusalem, Chadwick postulates the following:

1. About the time of Lehi's young adulthood (630 B.C.), the Assyrian withdrawal from the Land of Israel left Judean king Josiah with control not only of Judean territory, but of northern Israelite territories such as Ephraim and Manasseh as well. Thus, after 630 B.C., the Manassite "land of inheritance" would once again have been available for claim by Lehi and the sons who would be born to him.

2. Upon being informed by the Lord that "Jerusalem must be destroyed," Lehi secured his supplies of precious metals (gold, silver, etc.) by hiding them at a location outside the city-- the "land of inheritance" which he possessed in Manasseh.

[Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Lehi's House at Jerusalem and the Land of His Inheritance," 1999, pp. 1-12, unpublished paper]



1 Nephi 3:16 **Let us go down to the land of our father's inheritance (Illustration):** "The Land of Israel 600 B.C." [Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Lehi's House at Jerusalem and the Land of His Inheritance," 1999, illustrative map in an unpublished 1993 paper]

1 Nephi 3:18 **If My Father Should Dwell in the Land after He Hath Been Commanded to Flee out of the Land, Behold, He Would Also Perish:**

According to Brant Gardner, the return to the land of Jerusalem was likely to have shaken what little faith that Laman and Lemuel possessed, since Jerusalem had obviously *not* been destroyed. With this in mind it is fascinating that the argument that Nephi puts forth here in continuing to seek to obtain the plates of Laban is a defense of his father's prophecy that

Jerusalem would be destroyed, and if they stayed there after they had been commanded to leave they also would perish (see 1 Nephi 3:18). Nephi reminds his brothers that the entire journey of their family is a command from the Lord, and that they should obtain the records in order to preserve unto their children the language of their fathers (see v. 19). Nephi's reasons for obtaining the plates have validity only when we understand that Nephi knew that their descendants were to be cut off from their previous culture. Perhaps Laman and Lemuel were thinking that they would "lay low" for a while and then return to their own people. Nephi's argument that the plates were essential to their cultural preservation (see v. 20) indicates his understanding that this journey was one which would completely and inalterably sever physical ties with their land and culture (he had been told that they would be led to "a land of promise"--see 1 Nephi 2:20). Thus the need to preserve the scriptural heritage. [Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi3.htm>, pp. 10-11]

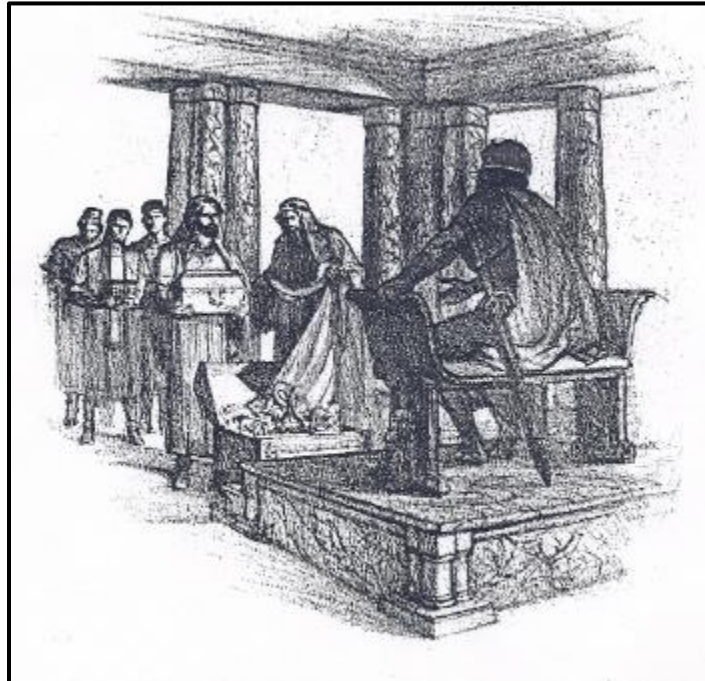
1 Nephi 3:19 **The Language of Our Fathers:**

According to Hugh Nibley, we learn in Mosiah 1:4 that certain plates (the plates of brass) were written "in the language of the Egyptians." Nephi informs us (1 Nephi 3:19) that these same plates were in "the language of our fathers," and that the possession of them was necessary if a knowledge of that language was to be preserved among his people. To preserve mere *characters* but a single page of Hebrew and Egyptian signs would have been necessary, and Lehi or his sons could have produced such from memory, since they had already been taught them. And if the language in question were Hebrew, Lehi's children could have produced from their own resources any number of books in their own language, so that when Nephi expresses his belief that without that one volume of plates a language will be lost--the ancient language of his fathers--he cannot possibly be speaking of Hebrew. The preservation of Hebrew would naturally require possession of the scriptures, the canon of the pure language, but these could be had anywhere in Judah and would not require the dangerous mission to Laban. The language of Lehi's forefathers was a foreign language; and when Nephi tells us it was the language of the Egyptians he means what he says. Since time immemorial Israelites had been sojourning in Egypt individually and in groups, and there is nothing the least surprising in the possibility that Lehi's ancestors were among such settlers. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 24]

1 Nephi 3:22 **We Went down to the Land of Our Inheritance, And We Did Gather Together Our Gold:**

Nephi notes that after failing in their first attempt to obtain the brass plates, "we went down to the land of our inheritance, and we did gather together our gold, and our silver, and our precious things" (1 Nephi 3:22). Brant Gardner notes that while not specifically stated, it

might be reasoned that Lehi left servants in charge of the family holdings. It would be hard to imagine that a significant wealth such as Lehi apparently had accumulated could go for very long entirely unguarded. Certainly the lands and goods were not sold nor exchanged prior to the journey into the wilderness, a fact which doubtless encouraged Laman and Lemuel's assumption that they could return to their former life (see 1 Nephi 2:11). Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, Book of Mormon Commentary, <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStoics/1Nephi/1Nephi 3, p. 9>]



1 Nephi 3:23 **After we had gathered these things [gold and silver and precious things] we went up again unto the house of Laban (Illustration):** Nephi and His Brothers at the House of Laban. Artist: Ronald Crosby. [Mary Pratt Parrish, The Book of Mormon Story, p. 10]

1 Nephi 3:25 **Exceedingly Great . . . Property (Camels):**

Hugh Nibley believes the use of camels is implied at every turn of the story of the mission to Laban: the otherwise insane carrying of tents, the trip down-country to bring back "exceedingly great . . . property" (1 Nephi 3:25) to Laban's palace (hardly on their shoulders!), the flight into the open country and pursuit in the desert, and finally the long and necessarily hasty return trip (for they were marked men and possibly the direction of their take-off had been noted) to the secret base camp. Just as the Saints who had the means of avoiding it never crossed the plains on foot, so we would think Lehi's sons foolish indeed if they did not avail themselves of the common means of transportation that everyone was using--for camels were as common then as automobiles are today.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 58]

1 Nephi 3:25 **Laban . . . sent his servants to slay us (Illustration – not shown):** "Laban . . . sent his servants to slay us, that he might obtain our property," by A&OR. [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1041]

1 Nephi 3:27 **We Fled into the Wilderness, and the Servants of Laban Did Not Overtake Us:**

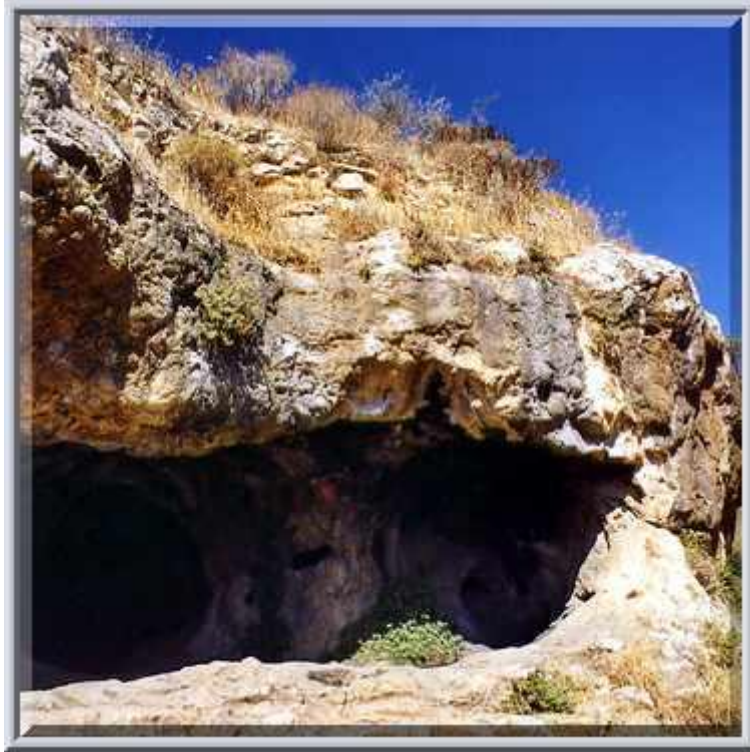
There are many things in the Book of Mormon that are not mentioned, but through cultural implication are all over the place. Some of these cultural items are asses and camels. When Hugh Nibley first came to B.Y.U., he started writing *Lehi in the Desert*. He relates that, "the Church had a rather ridiculous film out in which they showed Lehi's people all going through the desert carrying everything they had on their backs because the Book of Mormon doesn't mention any animals of burden, you see. . . ."

After making a case regarding the Arab tent and the fact that Lehi "dwelt in a tent," Nibley points out that on the trip back to Jerusalem to secure the brass plates, Laban lusted after the property of Nephi and his brethren and "sent his servants to slay" them (1 Nephi 3:25). When Nephi and his brethren ran away, they escaped from Laban's police. Nephi said, "they pursued us but they couldn't overtake us" (see 1 Nephi 3:25-27). Well, Nephi and his brethren weren't going on foot because we know that the police of Jerusalem had good, fleet-footed Arab horses. Nephi and his brethren had ways of getting out. And, of course, there would be asses or camels to cross the desert." [Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, pp. 118-119]

1 Nephi 3:27 **We Hid Ourselves in the Cavity of a Rock:**

It seems that Nephi's comment that "we hid ourselves in the cavity of a rock" (1 Nephi 3:27) was culturally correct. According to Hugh Nibley, since the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* started to appear many years ago, its readers have been treated to a constant flow of official reports on newly-discovered caves in and near Jerusalem. The country is peppered with them; for the area southwest of the city, "it is difficult to give an account of the principal excavations of this type [of caves] without appearing to use the language of exaggeration. . . . To attempt a descriptive catalogue of these caves would be altogether futile. The mere labor of searching the hills for examples . . . would be almost endless." . . . But who in America knew of these hiding places a hundred years ago?

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 93-94]



Cave near Jerusalem

asergeev.com



1 Nephi 3:27 **We hid ourselves in the cavity of a rock (Illustration):** Cavities in the rock like this one dot the limestone hills and valleys outside the city of Jerusalem. [Scot and Maurine Proctor, Light from the Dust, p. 18]

1 Nephi 3:27 **We Hid Ourselves in the Cavity of a Rock:**

Lamar Berrett writes:

About twenty miles south-west of Jerusalem and ten miles west-north-west of Hebron, the government of Israel constructed a security road in 1961 to protect the border between Jordan and Israel. During the course of construction an ancient burial cave was uncovered on the eastern slope of Khirbet Beit Lei. The Israel Department of Antiquities excavated the cave during the month of June, 1961, under the direction of Joseph Naveh, Professor of Archaeology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They named the cave the "Jerusalem Cave."

The LDS interest in the cave comes from both the Book of Mormon incident of the brothers hiding in a cave, as well as the particular graffiti on the walls of the cave. Three human figures are represented, as well as two very crude ships. The old inscriptions have been translated as:

"The mountains of Judah--Yahveh [is] the God of the whole earth; the mountains of Judah belong to him, to the God of Jerusalem."

" The [Mount of] Moriah Thou has favoured, the dwelling of Yah, Yahveh"

"[Ya]hveh deliver [us]!"

Attempts to date the cave and its inscriptions have proved interesting. Paleography, the study of the form of letters, was of auxiliary value in drawing chronological conclusions concerning these inscriptions. The form of the letters varied greatly. "In view of the nature of the graffiti," says Naveh, "we assume that all the inscriptions and drawings belong to a short period of time, and they were incised by a number of persons." He concludes that the form of the burial cave and the script are of the pre-exilic period, or prior to 587 B.C."

The most fascinating interpretation of the graffiti comes from Frank Moore Cross, Jr., professor at Harvard University. Dr. Cross proposes a 600 B.C. date for the inscriptions, and notes: "It is very difficult to avoid the speculation that inscription A is the citation of a lost prophecy, and that it and its companion inscriptions were written by a refugee fleeing the Chaldeans who conquered Judah and who destroyed the holy city in 587 B.C. Most documents, especially manuscripts and papyri, found in Palestinian caves were left behind by men in such circumstances. The same may be true of these graffiti. Perhaps such speculations are built on too flimsy a foundation of facts; at all events we should suppress the temptation to suggest that the oracle and the petitions may have been the work of a prophet or his amanuensis fleeing Jerusalem."

(Lamar C. Berrett, "The So-Called Lehi Cave," FARMS reprint, 1982, pp. 1-3)

According to Brant Gardner, clearly the LDS community would be interested in a cave

associated with the name *Lei*, containing inscriptions related to a fleeing prophet, and particularly noting sailing vessels. Have we found the cave that Nephi and in brothers hid in? Probably not. Nevertheless the cave is very instructive of the times. Certainly it indicates that the *act* of hiding in a cave was a known tradition. At the very least, it places Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi in very good ancient company.

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi3.htm>, pp. 15-16]

1 Nephi 3:29 **They Smote Us with a Rod:**

According to Hugh Nibley, is it any wonder that Laman and Lemuel worked off their pent-up frustration by beating their younger brother with a stick when they were once hiding in a cave? Every free man in the East carries a stick, the immemorial badge of independence and authority; and every man asserts his authority over his inferiors by his stick, which "shows that the holder is a man of position, superior to the workman or day-labourers. . . . This is exactly the sense in which Laman and Lemuel intended their little lesson to Nephi, for when the angel turned the tables he said to them, *Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be ruler over you?*" (1 Nephi 3:29)

[Hugh Nibley, [Lehi in the Desert](#), F.A.R.M.S., pp. 69-70]



They smote us with a rod

patheos.com

1 Nephi 3:29 **A Rod:**

The use of the rod or staff as a symbol of rule is mentioned in a number of Bible passages (Psalms 110:2; Isaiah 14:5; Jeremiah 48:17; Ezekiel 19:11-12 14; cf. D&C 85:7).

According to John Tvedtnes, it is interesting that when Laman and Lemuel were stopped from beating their younger brothers Sam and Nephi with a rod, the angel said to them, "Why do ye smite your younger brother with a *rod*? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a *ruler* over you, and this because of your iniquities?" (1 Nephi 3:29; cf. 1 Nephi 2:22; 2 Nephi 5:19). It is possible that the elder brothers deliberately selected the rod to punish their brother to symbolize their claim to ruling authority in the family. (Several Book of Mormon passages note that the Lamanites believed that Nephi had stolen from them their rights to govern the

people (2 Nephi 5:3; Mosiah 10:15-16; Alma 54:17).

[John A. Tvedtnes, "*Rod and Sword as the Word of God*," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 5/2, p. 148]



Queen Elizabeth II coronation sparklingmode.blogspot.com
Note the scepter in her right hand. Also note the "ball" in her left hand.

Note* It is also interesting to compare the use of a rod in the story of Nephi with the "rod of God" mentioned in the story of Moses:

"And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt . . . and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand. And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." (Exodus 4:19-21)

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they

became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said." (Exodus 7:8-13)

Did Nephi take with him a "rod of God" when he returned to Jerusalem to secure the plates of Laban? Did Laman and Lemuel, like Pharaoh and his wise men who represented false authority and false ideas, also harden their hearts? (See 1 Nephi 3:31; 4:4.)

1 Nephi 3:29 **They smote us with a rod (Illustration – not shown):** "Laman and Lemuel did speak many hard words unto us . . . and they did smite us even with a rod. And . . . as they smote us with a rod, behold, an angel of the Lord came and stood before them, " [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1043]

1 Nephi 3:29 **As they smote us with a rod, behold, an angel of the Lord came (Illustration – not shown):** Angel Saves Nephi. [Artist: Gary E. Smith, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 2]

1 Nephi 3:31 **He Can Command Fifty:**

Hugh Nibley asserts that Nephi's reference to a military garrison of "fifty" (1 Nephi 3:31) seems pitifully small for a great city like Jerusalem. It would have been just as easy for the author of 1 Nephi to have said "fifty thousand," and made it really impressive. Yet even the older brothers, though they wish to emphasize Laban's great power, mention only fifty, and it is Nephi in answering them who says that the Lord is "mightier than Laban and his fifty," and adds, "or even than his tens of thousands" (1 Nephi 4:1). As a high military commander Laban would have his tens of thousands in the field, but such an array is of no concern to Laman and Lemuel: it is the "fifty" they must look out for, the regular, permanent garrison of Jerusalem. The number fifty suits perfectly with the Amarna picture where the military forces are always so surprisingly small and a garrison of thirty to eighty men is thought adequate even for big cities. It is strikingly vindicated in a letter of Nebuchadnezzar, Lehi's contemporary, wherein the great king orders: "As to the fifties who were under your orders, those gone to the rear, or fugitives, return them to the ranks." Commenting on this, Offord says, "In these days it is interesting to note the indication here, that in the Babylonian army a platoon contained fifty men"; also, we might add, that it was called a "fifty," --hence, "Laban and his fifty" (1 Nephi 4:1). Of course, companies of fifty are mentioned in the Bible, along with tens and hundreds, etc., but not as garrisons of great cities and not as *the* standard military unit of this time. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 97-98]

Nibley also states that Jerusalem was run by the *sarim* or "members of the official class; that is, officers acting under the king, as his counselors and rulers. Further, Laban is cut from the same cloth as Jaush, his contemporary and probably his successor as the military governor

of the whole region, in control of the defenses along the western frontier of Judah." [Hugh Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, p. 80]

1 Nephi 3:31 (Chapter Ending):

Brant Gardner notes that while verse 31 ends 1 Nephi chapter 3 in our modern edition, and separates this section from chapter 4's events; and while there is a change of intent and speaker which allows this shift, it is all part of the same story. It was not so divided in the original edition of the Book of Mormon. The story of obtaining the brass plates of Laban was a single story. [Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "[http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1 Nephi/1 Nephi3.htm](http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1%20Nephi/1%20Nephi3.htm), p. 20]

Chapter 4

1 Nephi 4:1 **Let Us Be Faithful in Keeping the Commandments of the Lord:**

Stephen Robinson notes that in the Old Testament, the words for *faith*, *faithful*, and *faithfulness* all come from the Hebrew "aman" (to be firm or reliable) and imply primarily qualities of loyalty and determination rather than qualities of belief. The words for *security*, *certainty*, and *guarantee* all come from the same Hebrew root. Thus being faithful does not have as much to do with our belief or even our activity in the Church as it does with whether we can be *trusted* to do our [covenant] duty in the earthly kingdom of God.

[Stephen E. Robinson, Following Christ, p. 24]

1 Nephi 4:2 **Let Us Be Strong Like unto Moses:**

The reader should understand that Nephi's trip back to secure the plates of Laban has a covenant setting; that is, Nephi is showing the reader that the Lord's power to keep his covenants with those who obey him is "mightier than all the earth" (1 Nephi 4:1). Thus, the reader should be aware of the symbolic comparisons noted within the story. One of those comparisons which Nephi points to is Moses' triumph over the power of Pharaoh:

Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea (1 Nephi 4:2)

On September 6, 2000, Kerry Muhlestein, a graduate student at UCLA and a Nibley fellow, made a FARMS presentation in which he examined the confrontation between Moses and Aaron and the priests of Pharaoh as a challenge to the Egyptian view of divine kingship. He listed the key elements of Egyptian kingship, showing that Pharaoh was regarded both as the son of Re and Osiris and as the embodiment of Re, Osiris, and Horus, making him the creator god and therefore divine.

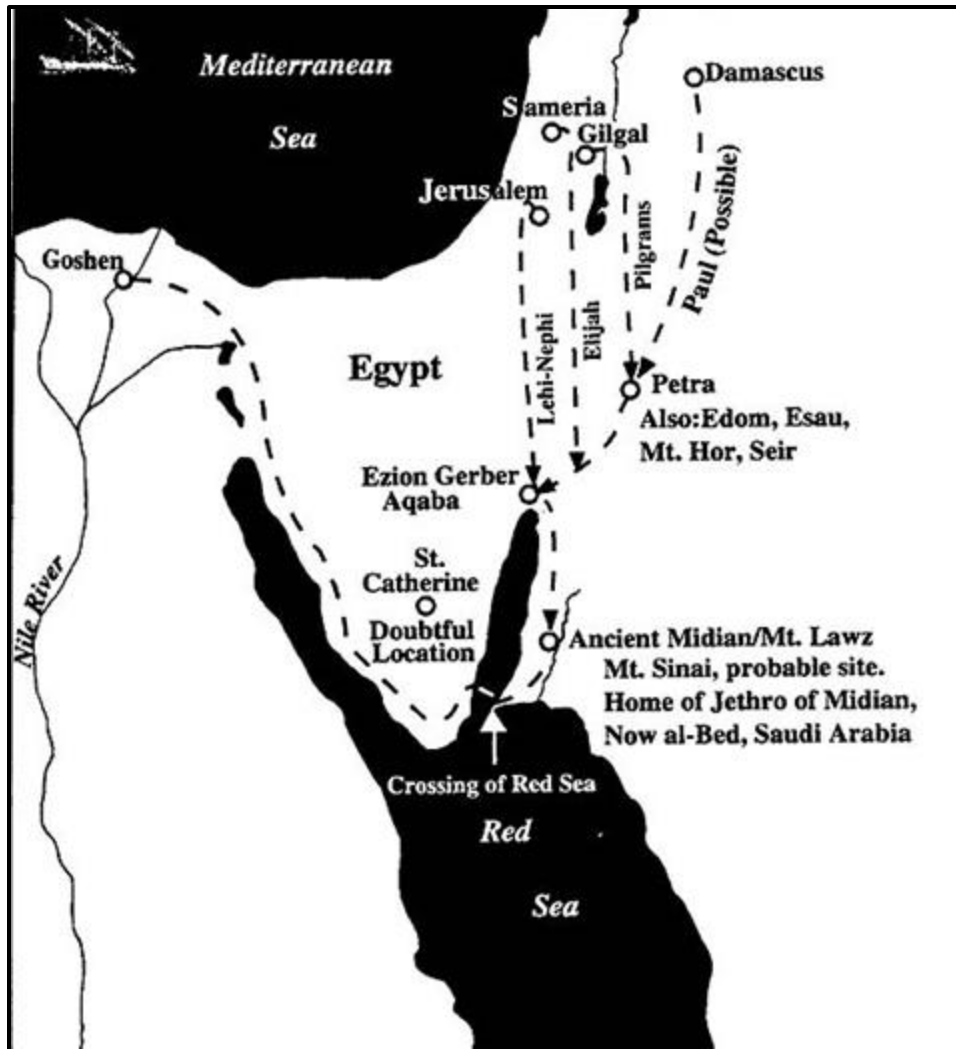
For each plague that the Lord visited on Egypt through Moses, Muhlestein pointed out the direct challenge to Pharaoh's claim of divine kingship. For example, the victory of the snake that came from Aaron's rod over the snakes conjured by the priests was a direct challenge to the Uraeus, the symbol of the Pharaoh (in the form of a cobra on Pharaoh's crown). Other examples include the water turned to blood, which challenged Pharaoh's domination of the

Nile; the plague on the livestock, which threatened Pharaoh's role as the shepherd of Egypt; the plague of boils, which targeted the king's connection with Horus and Isis, who were doctors; the fiery hail, locusts and crop damage, and the darkening of the sun all of which countered the traditional image of the king as a protector; and the final plague, the angel of death, which challenged Pharaoh's ability to protect his children (the heir to his throne was killed, but the Israelites, God's heirs, were saved). These challenges continued as the children of Israel left Egypt; for example, the parting of the Red Sea saved the children of Israel but destroyed Pharaoh's armies.

[Kerry Muhlestein, "The Plagues as a Challenge to Pharaoh's Divinity," FARMS presentation, farms, byu.edu/web/insights/nov 00/pf.asp?content=plagues]

1 Nephi 4:2 **Let Us Be Strong Like unto Moses:**

Did Nephi have any special affinity to Moses? According to the Hiltons, both Nephi and Moses might have been familiar with the sacred heights of Mount Sinai. The actual site of Moses' Mount Sinai has long been an open question. The traditional site at St. Catherine's in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula is only one of several possible sites. However a new look (Williams, 223), following indications from satellite infrared pictures, has identified a broad ancient trail from Egypt that passes down the west side of the Sinai Peninsula (bypassing St. Catherine's) and arrives at the Straits of Tiran. The infrared data identifies the trail coming out of the Red Sea 10 miles away on the east side of the Strait in Saudi Arabia (see illustration). The trail goes to Jethro of Midian (near al-Bad) and ends in a huge campsite on the east side of Mount Lawz, a large mountain only 15 miles northeast of the village of al-Bad. Could this be the real Sinai? [Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, Discovering Lehi, p. 59] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 11:1; 3 Nephi 25:4]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Illustration):** Proposed locations for Mt. Sinai.. Figure 5-3: Alternate Sites of Mt. Sinai. Illustration of visits made to Mt. Sinai as identified in Midian (Araba). [Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *Discovering Lehi*, p. 59]



Alternative Locations for Mt. Sinai

jacobcherians.blogspot.com

Visitor(s)	Reference	Approx. Year(s)	Distance (one way)	Explanation
Moses	Ex 2:15-21 Ex 3:1	1431 B.C.	Egypt-Jethro of Midian 268 miles	Fled for his life from Egypt. Tended Jethro's sheep 15 miles from Jethro to Sinai. Burning bush. Commanded to go back to Egypt. Lived 40 years in Midian with Jethro. Married Zipporah. Jethro ordained him to Melchizedek Priesthood
Moses & Twelve Tribes	Deut 1:2	1391 B.C.	Coshen-Jethro of Midian and Mt. Sinai 268 miles 3 months	Fled from slavery in Egypt. Crossed Red Sea at Straits of Tiran. Passed Jethro, camped at Mt. Sinai 15 miles to the N.E. Received the 10 Commandments. Aaron made golden calf. Lived 14 months at Sinai.
Israel Pilgrims	Internat Standard Bible Dictionary Vol 4:526	1300-1000 B.C.	Gilgal-Sinai 230 miles 12 days trip	Religious Pilgrimages by members of 12 Tribes, undertaken in early years of Israel's nationhood.
Elijah	1 Kg 19:1-21	873 B.C.	Israel-Sinai 265 miles 40 days round trip. Returned to Damascus	Fled for his life from Queen Jezebel. He hid in a cave in Mt. Sinai. Heard the still small voice of the Lord.
Lehi/Nephi	1 Ne 2:6-19	600 B.C.	Jerusalem-Valley of Lemuel (al-Bed' near Sinai) 232 miles Est. 12 days journey	Fled for his life from Jews. Camped by river of water, three days journey after arriving at the Red Sea (Aqaba), it was site of Jethro and Sinai. Nephi probably prayed on Mt. Sinai and experienced his vision of Jesus there. Camped here probably 4 years.
Paul (possible)	2 Cor 11:32 Gal 1:17 Gal 4:24	35-38 A.D.	Damascus-Sinai 355 miles approx. 18 days trip	Fled for his life from Damascus, let down from city wall in basket. Went to 'Arabia,' probably Mt. Sinai to meditate his Christian conversion.

1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Illustration):** Theory of Visits to Mt. Sinai in Midian [Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *Discovering Lehi*, p. 60]

1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai--Horeb):**

According to Ray Huntington, despite the importance of Moses' exodus with the children of Israel through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, or Horeb (see 3 Nephi 25:4) in the Old Testament narrative, biblical scholars are not in agreement regarding the mountain's location. Much of the confusion is due to a lack of geographical information in the biblical text. . . . This lack of geographical information is significant, for Mount Sinai was along the route traveled by the children of Israel after their exodus from Egypt. But the book of Exodus also does not tell us where the Israelites miraculously crossed the Red Sea or in which direction they traveled once they were on the other side. Consequently, it is difficult to determine if Mount Sinai is, for example, in the north or south of the area we call the Sinai Peninsula or located in another region of the Middle East, such as Arabia. . . . Religious and secular scholars typically refer to three specific geographical areas as probable locations for Mount Sinai: southeastern Sinai

Peninsula, northwestern Sinai Peninsula, and northwestern Arabia. [Ray L. Huntington, "Do We Know Where Mount Sinai Is?" in *The Ensign*, April 1998, pp. 32-33] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 11:1; 3 Nephi 25:4]

<i>A LATTER-DAY SAINT VIEW OF NOAH</i>	
The left column lists the Bible's teachings about Noah; the right column lists additional information restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.	
WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES	WHAT LATTER-DAY REVELATION ADDS
<p>Premortality [no items]</p>	<p>Premortality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Befitting his important priesthood relationship to Adam,¹ Noah would have been one of the noble and great ones in pre-earth life selected to be one of the Lord's rulers in mortality (see <i>Abr.</i> 3:22–23). • Enoch foresaw Noah and his posterity (see <i>Moses</i> 7:42) and that all kingdoms on earth were to come through Noah (see <i>Moses</i> 8:3).
<p>Mortality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noah, son of Lamech, was a great-grandson of Enoch and an ancestor of Jesus Christ (see <i>Gen.</i> 5:21, 25, 28–29; <i>Luke</i> 3:23–36). • He fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth (see <i>Gen.</i> 5:32). • He was a preacher of righteousness (see <i>2 Pet.</i> 2:5). • He was a just man, perfect in his generation, and he walked with God (see <i>Gen.</i> 6:9). • He learned that God would destroy the wicked (see <i>Gen.</i> 6:13). • He built the ark, gathered his family and the animals, and entered (see <i>Gen.</i> 6:14–22; 7:2–16; <i>Heb.</i> 11:7). • The Flood covered the whole earth (see <i>Gen.</i> 7:19–23). • After the Flood, the ark again rested on the earth (see <i>Gen.</i> 8:1–14). • He offered sacrifice to the Lord (see <i>Gen.</i> 8:20–22). • He and his family received commandments as well as a covenant that the Lord will not again destroy all flesh by a flood (see <i>Gen.</i> 9:1–17). • He became a husbandman (see <i>Gen.</i> 9:20). • He cursed Canaan, the son of Ham, and gave blessings to Shem and Japheth (see <i>Gen.</i> 9:25–27). • His descendants filled the earth (see <i>Gen.</i> 9:19). • He died at 950 years of age (see <i>Gen.</i> 9:28–29). 	<p>Mortality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Noah was ten years old when he was ordained [to the priesthood] under the hand of Methuselah" (<i>D&C</i> 107:52). • His sons—the eldest of whom was Japheth—hearkened to the Lord (see <i>Moses</i> 8:12–13). • He preached the fulness of the gospel, including the first principles, as did Adam and Enoch (see <i>Moses</i> 8:16, 24). • For 120 years he called the people to repentance, warning them of the Flood that would occur if they did not repent, but he was rejected (see <i>Moses</i> 8:16–17, 20, 23–24). • People tried to kill Noah (see <i>Moses</i> 8:18). • Noah built the ark after a "pattern of heavenly things."² • The Lord renewed with Noah the great covenant he had made with Enoch—that when righteousness comes again on earth, "Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch" (see <i>JST</i>, <i>Gen.</i> 9:21).

Postmortality	Postmortality
[no items]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noah, known as the angel Gabriel, visited Daniel, Zacharias, and Mary (see <i>History of the Church</i>, 3:386; Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26–27). • He was “among the great and mighty ones who were assembled” in the spirit world whom the Savior instructed and prepared as messengers to “carry the message of redemption” to those in prison to whom the Savior did “not go personally, because of their rebellion and transgression” (D&C 138:37–38, 41; see also D&C 128:22). • He visited with the Prophet Joseph Smith during the Prophet’s latter-day ministry (see D&C 128:21). • In company with other righteous prophets, Noah will partake of the sacrament on the earth and with the Lord at a yet future gathering of the righteous (see D&C 27:5–7, 14; see also Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Elias,” and <i>History of the Church</i>, 3:386).
<small>¹Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 157. ²Teachings, 251.</small>	

1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Illustration):** A Latter-Day Saint View of Moses (What the Bible Teaches; What the Latter-day Revelation Adds) [Todd B. Parker and Robert Norman, "Moses, Witness of Jesus Christ," in The Ensign, April 1998, pp. 26-28]

1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb):**

According to George Potter, mount Sinai is important to Book of Mormon readers for the following reasons: (1) It would have been the most ancient of all temple sites known to Nephi; (2) It would have been a dedicated site--a place where special "temple" ordinances might be performed (see D&C 37:55); (3) It probably was located near the Valley of Lemuel; and (4) It might possibly play a part in the Second Coming. In D&C 29:13 we read: "For a trump shall sound both long and loud, even as upon Mount Sinai, and all the earth shall quake, and they shall come forth--yea, even the dead which died in me, to receive a crown of righteousness, and to be clothed upon, even as I am, to be with me, that we may be one." Muslims hold that it is the actual site where God will take the faithful when He comes in the Last Days. This implies that Sinai has a special connection with God and his covenant people.

The following is a list of what the scriptures say about mount Sinai:

1. According to the book of Exodus, Moses is said to have led the children of Israel out of Egypt by crossing the Red Sea. They continued to journey until they camped around mount Sinai, the place where Moses received his calling while watching over the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro in the land of Midian. There they were met by Jethro (Exodus 2:15, 19; 3:1-8, 10, 12; 18:1, 5). Midian is said to be located in the furthest northwest corner of Arabia called Midian (Exodus 4:19-25--See the LDS Bible map).

2. The burning bush and subsequently the camp of Israel were said to be on the backside of the mountain, the side away from the homeland of Moses and Jethro (Exodus 3:1-2).

3. There was an altar built of unhewn stones (Exodus 20:24-26).

4. Sinai had a brook (Deuteronomy 9:21).

5. An altar of the Golden Calf was made within sight of the mount (Exodus 32:17-19).

6. Boundary markers were erected to prevent the children of Israel from coming upon the mountain (Exodus 19:23).

7. Twelve pillars were set up for each tribe (Exodus 24:4).

8. Sinai had a habitable cave that was used by Elijah (1 Kings 19:8-9).

9. The mountain was "exceedingly high" (Moses 1:1).

10. There was room for approximately 3,000,000 Israelites to camp next to the mountain (Exodus 12:37).

11. From the campsite at the foot of the mountain, the children of Israel could see the presence of God (Exodus 19:17-18).

12. There was ample grazing for the animals of the Israelites for an extended period of time.

13. The apostle Paul placed the Mountain of Moses in Arabia (Galatians 4:25). Since Paul spent time in Arabia, it is possible that he actually visited the mountain himself: "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia . . ." (Galatians 1:17).

Although 55% of the modern locations of biblical place-names are still lost to us, there are several key place-names that have been carried down from antiquity.^{xvi} One of these is Midian where mount Sinai was located. The account of Moses reads that he fled from the face of pharaoh, and came to the land of Midian and sat down by a well:

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them

away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. (Exodus 2:15-17)

There is ample scholarly evidence that Midian was both a town and also a "land" in northwest Arabia.^{xvii} The land of Midian has its western border on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba. Its capital city, *Madyan* (Midian), was a major halt of the ancient frankincense trade route from southern Arabia to Egypt, and would have been a good place for Moses to have come upon as he fled along the trail from Egypt.^{xviii} The official name of the town is now al-Bada'a, however modern Arabic maps of northwest Arabia still show the name of the town as *Shu'ayb*, the Arabic spelling of Jethro.

Over a thousand years ago, the early Islamic geographer Al-Hauqal wrote that there was a well in Midian from which Moses watered the flocks of Jethro (Shu'aib). He explained, even then, that the name of the town was derived from the tribe of Jethro.^{xix} Writing in the same period, Al-Muqqaddasi wrote, "Here may be seen the stone which Moses removed when he gave water to the flocks of Shu'aib. Water here is abundant."^{xx} Abdulla Al-Wohaibi, who compiled the writings of Arab geographers between A.D. 900-1100 noted that "the attention that Madyan [Midian] has always attracted from the Arab geographers is due to the fact that it is mentioned in the Qur'an in connection with the story of the prophet Shu'aib [Jethro]."^{xxi}

Arab geographers place the land of Midian west of the city of Tabuk,^{xxii} which infers that the land of Midian reached only a short distance into the interior of Arabia (Tabuk is less than 150 miles east of the Gulf of Aqaba). Although local traditions can be misleading, the local habitants of Midian (al-Bada'a) have a rich tradition of Moses and his father-in-law Jethro. Besides the traditional name of the town being Jethro, the locals will readily show you the caves of Moses, the wells of Jethro, the wadi Horeb, the wadi Moses, and the Waters of Moses. Intriguingly on a visit to Midian, the renowned Arabia explorer H. St. John Philby also wrote of "circles of Jethro" from which he could view a mount "lauz": "From here my guide and I climbed up the cliffs to visit the 'circles' of Jethro on the summit of Musalla ridge, from which we climbed down quite easily to our camp on the far side. . . . A cairn marked the spot where Jethro is supposed to have prayed, and all around it are numerous circles, . . . from here I had a magnificent view of the whole of Midian mountain range, with Lauz [Jebel al-Lawz] and its sister peaks in the northeast."^{xxiii} As Philby described, the mount al-Lawz is visible from al-Bada'a (town of Midian) and is to its northeast. The Bible seems to suggest that al-Lawz might be mount Sinai. If Moses took Jethro's flocks there (Exodus 3:1), this implies that the mountain is in the vicinity of Al-Bada'a.

The Bible also says that Moses led the flocks of Jethro to the "backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb" (Exodus 3:1). Since Arabia has long been known as "the desert" or "the wilderness," its backside would be to the interior or east, not to the shoreline of the Gulf on the west. This would imply that the burning bush was on the eastside of the mountain, which is the opposite side from the town of al-Bada'a (Midian)--Jethro's home. The Qur'an states that the Lord appeared to Moses on the "right side" of the

mountain.^{xxiv} This is exactly the location where Potter's group found monuments and petroglyphs.

In contrast, Potter's group has observed large Bedouin camps in and around the mountains of Midian. Historian Abdulla Al-Wohaibi indicates that Midian was "a flourishing ancient town with numerous wells and permanently flowing springs whose water had a good taste. There are farms, gardens and groves of palm trees."^{xxv} In ancient times there appears to have been more than enough fodder for sheep in Midian. The Greek Agatharkides of Cnidos wrote of Midian, "the country is full of wild camels, as well as of flocks of deer, gazelles, sheep, mules, and oxen." As a result he also noted that the game "attracts numerous lions, wolves, and panthers."^{xxvi}

The traditional tourist site for Mount Sinai is located at St. Catherine's monastery on the Sinai Peninsula. All we know is that a psychic had convinced Constantine that this remote mountain near the southern end of the Sinai peninsula was the sacred mountain. Tim Sedor and George Potter visited St. Catherine's and found it a poor candidate for precisely the same reasons outlined by Larry Williams and Bob Cornuke in their book *Gold of Exodus* :

1. Moses would not have driven Jethro's flocks nearly two hundred miles to a land that is almost entirely void of fodder for sheep.
2. There is not enough room for a large encampment at the St. Catherine's site. Indeed the nearest campsite would have been what is referred to as the wadi of the Rest. This wadi could not have been where the children of Israel camped because the mountain is not visible from the campsite, and we know that the children of Israel were able to see the presence of God on the mountain.
3. Moses, a man of eighty years of age, would have needed to climb a mountain that requires mountaineering equipment to scale.
4. The mountain has no source of drinking water. Why would Moses have led more than 2.5 million people to a place with no water?
5. There is no archaeological evidence that there was an encampment of nearly 3,000,000 people.
6. None of the other features described in the Bible are found there (i.e. cave, markers, pillars, etc.)

Concerning this tourist location of Mt. Sinai at St. Catherines in the Sinai peninsula, one has to ask what Moses's reasons would have been for taking Jethro's flocks the great distance out of Arabia and into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula where the pasture was inferior and Moses was a wanted man. C. S. Jarvis, Britain's governor of the Sinai peninsula of Egypt after WWI, became

acquainted with the area during his long tenure there as perhaps no other westerner before him. In an article entitled "Yesterday and Today in Sinai" he wrote that there was no way the Israelite multitudes and their livestock could have traveled through-much less sustained themselves for more than a year-in the "tumbled mass of pure granite" of the southern Sinai. Furthermore, it should be remembered that Egyptian garrisons protected the copper mines near St. Catherine's mountain.

So if mount Sinai is not in the Sinai peninsula, and if it is indeed in the land of Midian, then where exactly is it? A bluntly naive thing to do is to just pick up a modern road map and follow it. The most widely used road maps in Arabia are published by Eng. Zaki M.A. Farsi. His map guide to Tabuk^{xxvii} covers the land of Midian. The modern roadmap shows a trail leading east from the wadi I'fal, about ten miles north of Al-Bada'a. The trail heads directly towards a towering V shaped mountain that towers into the sky. The name of the valley is "wadi Musa," meaning the valley of Moses. The wadi Musa (valley of Moses) ends at the western base of the V shaped mountain. On the "backside" or "eastside" of this very peak is where we [Potter's group] found the monuments that suggest that it is the real mount Sinai. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]

1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration – not shown]:** Map showing the site of St. Catherine's, one of the proposed sites for Mount Sinai, and also the Arabian site, another candidate for Mount Sinai. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** Photograph taken from the base of St. Catherine's, which is to the left, and not in site of the wadi of the Rest (in the distance), where according to one theory Israel supposedly camped. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** Susan Potter at the base of the St. Catherine's, one proposed candidate for Mount Sinai. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** George Potter at the Arabian site which has been proposed as a candidate for Mount Sinai. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]

1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** Well at al-Bada'a which locals claim is the well of Jethro. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** One of eleven boundary markers next to the Arabian candidate for Mount Sinai (the tribe of Levi, the priests, had no separate camp. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** Remains of one of the marble columns at the Arabian candidate for Mount Sinai. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** Two stone pathways lead to "Altar of Moses" at the Arabian Sinai site. The entire monument is made of unhewn stones. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]



1 Nephi 4:2 **Moses (Mt. Sinai-Horeb) [Illustration]:** Calf carvings that surround the entire structure alleged to be the "golden calf" altar at the Arabian Sinai site. [George Potter, "Where Is The Real Mount Sinai," E-published by Nephi Project, February 2002 at <http://www.nephiproject.com/sinai.htm>]

Note* George Potter and his companions have discovered more information concerning this candidate for the Mountain of Moses. He and Richard Wellington plan to author a book that discusses the mountain, the trail of the children of Israel to it, the place where they crossed the Red Sea, and the campsites they stayed in prior to reaching Mount Sinai.

Note* The apostle Paul seems to have known Sinai's location, as he referred to it along with its symbolic meaning relative to the ability of the Lord's covenant way to free a people from bondage through obedience to those covenants as they wander through the wilderness to the promised land where by covenant they will be adopted in and become a chosen people:

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which genereth to bondage, which is Agar [related to Hagar].

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

So for Nephi and Lehi, to go to reside in the Valley of Lemuel which was near Mt. Sinai is very symbolic relative to the bondage into which the children of Israel were plunging themselves by disobedience to the covenants they had made originally at that same location. Moreover, this area which included Mount Sinai would be the place where Nephi, like Moses, prepared himself to lead the children of Israel--remnants of the tribe of Joseph--through the wilderness to their promised land.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

Note* See the commentaries on 1 Nephi 1:1, 10:9; 11:1; 3 Nephi 25:4.

1 Nephi 4:2 [Moses] Truly Spake unto the Waters of the Red Sea and They Divided Hither and Thither, and Our Fathers Came through out of Captivity, on Dry Ground:

In a devotional address delivered on March 2, 1999 in the Marriot Center, Jeffrey Holland related the following:

Virtually everyone in the room knows the formula for revelation given in section 9 of the Doctrine and Covenants--you know, the verses about studying it out in your mind and the Lord promising to confirm or deny. What most of us don't read in conjunction with this is the section that precedes it--section 8. In the revelation the Lord defined revelation:

I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. [I love the combination there of both mind and heart. God will teach us in a reasonable way and in a revelatory way--mind and heart combined, by the Holy Ghost.] Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground. [D&C 8:2-3; emphasis added]

Question: Why would the Lord use the example of crossing the Red Sea as the classic example of "the spirit of revelation?" Why didn't he use the First Vision? Or the example from the book of Moses we just used? Or the vision of the brother of Jared? Well, he could have used any of these, but he didn't. Here he had another purpose in mind.

Usually we think of revelation as information. Just open the books to us, Lord, like: What was the political significance of the Louisiana Purchase or the essence of the second law of thermodynamics? It is obvious that when you see those kinds of questions on a test paper, you need revelation. Someone said prayer will never be eliminated from the schools so long as there are final examinations. But aside from the fact that you probably aren't going to get that kind of revelation--because in this Church we do not believe in ex nihilo [something out of nothing] creation, especially in exams--this is too narrow a concept of revelation. May I suggest how section 8 broadens our understanding of section 9, particularly in light of these "fights of affliction" that Paul spoke of and that I have been discussing.

First of all, revelation almost always comes in response to a question, usually an urgent question--not always, but usually. In that sense it does provide information, but it is urgently needed information, special information. Moses' challenge was how to get himself and the children of Israel out of this horrible predicament they were in. There were chariots behind them, sand dunes on every side, and just a lot of water immediately ahead. He needed information all right--what to do--but it wasn't a casual thing he was asking. In this case it was literally a matter of life and death.

You will need information, too, but in matters of great consequence it is not likely to

come unless you want it urgently, faithfully, humbly. Moroni calls it seeking "with real intent" (Moroni 10:4). If you can seek that way, and stay in that mode, not much that adversary can counter with will dissuade you from a righteous path. You can hang on, whatever the assault and affliction, because you have paid the price to--figuratively, at least--see the face of God and live.

Like Moses in his vision, there may come after the fact some competing doubts and some confusion, but they will pale when you measure them against the real thing. Remember the real thing. Remember how urgently you have needed help in earlier times and that you got it. The Red Sea will open to the honest seeker of revelation. The adversary does have power to hedge up the way, to marshal Pharaoh's forces and dog our escape right to the water's edge, but he can't produce the real thing. He cannot conquer if we will it otherwise. "Exerting all [our] powers to call upon God, "the light will again come, the darkness will again retreat, the safety will again be sure. That is lesson number one about crossing the Red Sea, your Red Seas, by the spirit of revelation.

Lesson number two is closely related to it. It is that in the process of revelation and in making important decisions, fear almost always plays a destructive, sometimes paralyzing role. To Oliver Cowdery, who missed the opportunity of a lifetime because he didn't seize it in the lifetime of the opportunity, the Lord said, "You did not continue as you commenced." Does that sound familiar to those who have been illuminated and then knuckled under to second thoughts and returning doubts? "It is not expedient that you should translate now," the Lord said in language that must have been very hard for Oliver to hear. "Behold, it was expedient when you commenced; but you feared, and the time is past, and it is not expedient now" (D&C 9:5, 10-11; emphasis added).

Every one of us runs the risk of fear. You do, and I do. Did you catch the line I tried to emphasize as I read the account from the Pearl of Great Price? For a moment in that confrontation "Moses began to fear exceedingly; and as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell" (Moses 1:20). That's when you see it--when you are afraid.

That is exactly the problem that beset the children of Israel at the edge of the Red Sea. That is lesson number two. It has everything to do with holding fast to earlier illumination. The record says, "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid."

Some, just like those Paul had described earlier, said, "Let's go back. This isn't worth it. We must have been wrong. That probably wasn't the right spirit telling us to leave Egypt." What they actually said to Moses was, "Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? . . . It has been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:10-12)

And I have to say, "What about that which has already happened? What about the miracle that got you here? What about the frogs and the lice? What about the rod and the serpent, the river and the blood? What about the hail, the locusts, the fire, and firstborn sons?"

How soon we forget. It would not have been better to stay and serve the Egyptians, and it is not better to remain outside the Church nor to reject a mission call nor to put off marriage and so on and so on forever. Of course our faith will be tested as we fight through these self-doubts and second thoughts. Some days we will be miraculously led out of Egypt--seemingly free, seemingly on our way--only to come to yet another confrontation, like all that water lying before us. At those times we must resist the temptation to panic and to give up. At those times fear will be the strongest of the adversary's weapons against us. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord . . . The Lord shall fight for you." Jehovah said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exodus 14:13-15; emphasis added).

That is the second lesson of the spirit of revelation. After you have gotten the message, after you have paid the price to feel his love and hear the word of the Lord, "go forward." Don't fear, don't vacillate don't quibble, don't whine. You may, like Alma going to Ammonihah, have to find a route that leads an unusual way, but that is exactly what the Lord was doing here for the children of Israel. Nobody had ever crossed the Red Sea this way, but so what? There's always a first time. With the spirit of revelation, dismiss your fears and wade in with both feet. In the words of Joseph Smith, "Brethren [and, I would add, sisters], Shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!" (D&C 128:22)

The third lesson from the Lord's spirit of revelation in the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea is that, along with the illuminating revelation that points us toward a righteous purpose or duty, God will also provide the means and power to achieve that purpose. Trust in that eternal truth. If God has told you something is right, if something is indeed true for you, he will provide the way for you to accomplish it (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

[Jeffrey R. Holland, "'Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence'," pp. 4-7, <http://speeches.byu.edu/devo/98-99/HollandW99.html>]

1 Nephi 4:3 And to Destroy Laban, Even As the Egyptians:

Brant Gardner notes that Nephi's selection of an example to inspire Laman and Lemuel to try again to obtain the brass plates from Laban is very interesting. Of all the stories he could have chosen, Nephi selects a story in which the Lord killed the enemy: "the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 4:3). . . . Nephi may not have had any conscious plan to find and kill Laban, but if we can assume that his speech to his brothers was inspired, then the Lord provided a precursor to the events which

followed.

[Brant Gardner, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, 1Nephi/1 Nephi 4, p. 1]

1 Nephi 4:4 **The Walls of Jerusalem:**

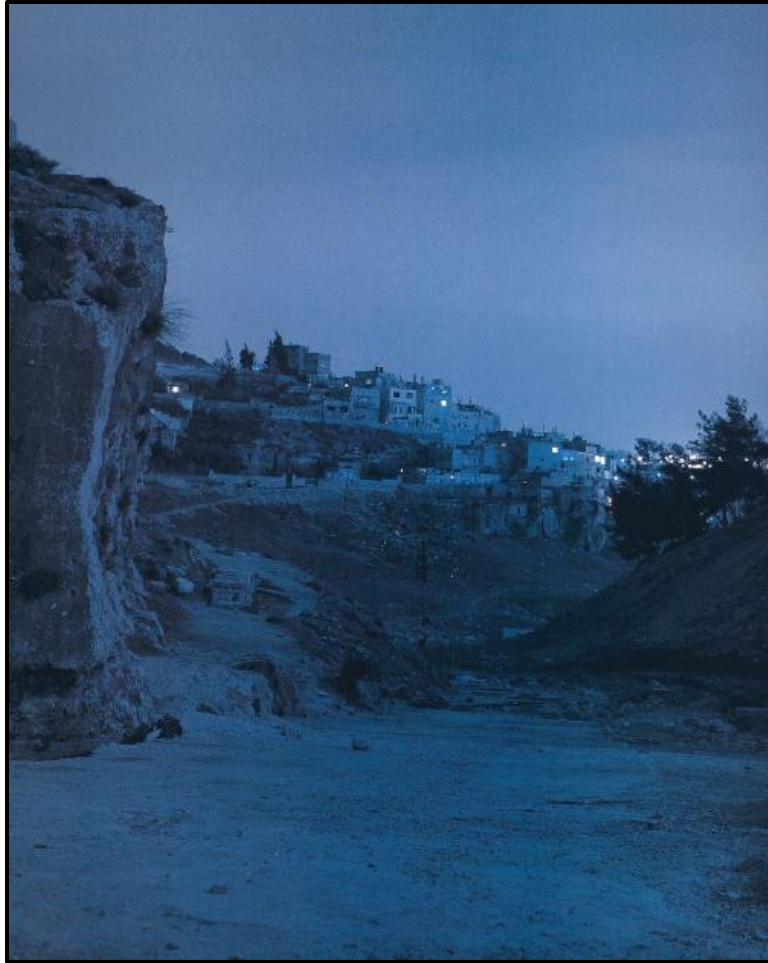
According to Hugh Nibley, in an old *Saints Herald*, Emma Smith was being interviewed after the death of the Prophet. She said when they got to this passage (Joseph Smith was translating with the seer stones), he looked up with surprise and said, "Emma, did Jerusalem have walls?" He didn't even know the city had walls. He didn't know anything about what he was writing here. Yes, Jerusalem had walls.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 159]

1 Nephi 4:5 **I, Nephi, Crept into the City:**

Nephi left his brothers outside the city wall, and by night, "crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban" (1 Nephi 4:5). According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, just how and why Nephi "crept" into the city is not explained. In the large gates of a walled city, there was a small door or rather window, through which those who were entitled to enter might do so, when the gate was closed for the night. Nephi might have literally "crept" in through such an aperture, by the grace of the watchman. It was always a small opening, sometimes only two feet square. Nephi, the son of a prominent, well-to-do citizen, coming alone to the gate, a belated wanderer unfortunately overtaken by the shadows of the night, might readily have obtained an entrance through what some have called "the needle's eye," particularly if he had a piece of money with which to make his account of himself plausible. If the brothers had come together at that hour, however, suspicions might have been aroused. The wisdom that inspired Nephi is seen in his conduct, and his account is so simple, so natural, as to make a perfect impression of its authenticity on the mind of the careful reader.

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, pp. 36-37]



1 Nephi 4:5 **I, Nephi, crept into the city [by night] (Illustration):** Nighttime exposure of the Kidron Valley on the east and south of the city Jerusalem. The brothers could have come up this way and easily secreted themselves in this ravine outside the walls of the city while Nephi crept in to find Laban. [Scot and Maurine Proctor, Light from the Dust, pp. 20-21]

1 Nephi 4:7 **He Had Fallen . . . He Was Drunken:**

In Nephi's narrative he writes that he "beheld a man, and he had fallen to the earth before me, for he was drunken with wine. And when I came to him I found that it was Laban" (1 Nephi 7:7-8). The words "fallen" and "drunken" are used in the scriptures in association with people who have rejected the Lord's covenant to a point that they are ripe for destruction (see Jeremiah 13:9-15; Mormon 6:16-19). This could have been Nephi's implication relative to the state of Laban.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 4:7 **He Was Drunken with Wine:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, the Hebrews were not, generally speaking, an intemperate people, but they enjoyed festivals. . . . It is not improbable that Laban had celebrated, in the midst of convivial friends, his acquisition of the property of Lehi, for that was an unexpected "harvest." There are some notable instances of intemperate drinking on record in the Hebrew Scriptures. One less known might be of interest here. In 1 Samuel 25:1-38, we find that Nabal was a wealthy sheep owner. On one occasion, when Nabal was feasting with his shearers, David (who had fled from Saul and was with his followers in the wilderness) sent word to him and asked for food as a recognition for the [apparent covenant] protection David had given to him and his flocks. Nabal refused. David then prepared for a raid on his property. But Abigail, the wife of Nabal, saved the situation by sending to David, without the knowledge of her husband, a handsome gift of provisions. In the meantime, Nabal feasted and drank. The next day, when he heard what his wife had done, he suffered a heart attack: "His heart died within him, and he became as a stone." About ten days afterwards he died.

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 37]

[See the commentary on 1 Nephi 3:3]

Note* The condition of Laban (in a "drunken" and "fallen" state) is symbolic in scripture of a covenant people ripe for destruction because of disobedience to the covenant. If Laban was the covenant caretaker of the record of Joseph (the plates of brass), and if this story is also meant to be symbolic, then he had apparently not been obedient to his covenant responsibility relative to the plates.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 4:9 **And I Beheld [Laban's] Sword . . . and the Workmanship Thereof Was Exceeding Fine:**

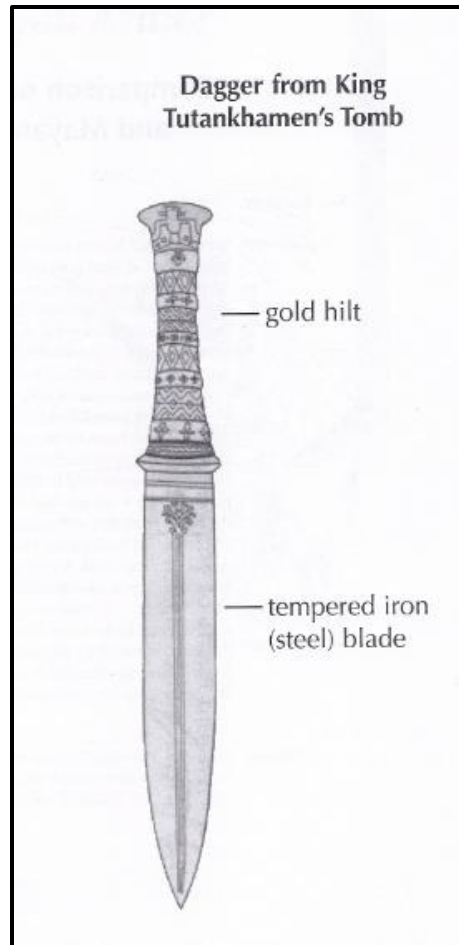
Daniel N. Rolph explains that though the Book of Mormon reveals that the sword of Laban (1 Nephi 4:9) served as an ancestral and hereditary sword of the ancient Nephite prophets, evidence suggests that the weapon may have been the birthright sword of biblical tradition, a sacred heirloom that may have been wielded by the patriarchs up until the time of Joseph of Egypt. Laban, being a descendant of Joseph, inherited the birthright sword and the plates of brass, both treasures eventually coming into the possession of Nephi, who was both a prophet and a descendant of Joseph, as was Joseph Smith, Jr. . . . Was it accidental, or an act of Providence, that Nephi brought the sword as well as the plates out of Jerusalem to the land of promise? It is interesting to learn that, according to Jewish tradition, the antediluvian patriarch Methuselah slew myriads of demons with a "wonderful sword," a weapon Abraham is also said to have inherited, by which he "conquered the kings . . . Esau thus received it, as heirloom, from Isaac, since he was the first-born. This sword passed to Jacob when he purchased the birthright."

[Daniel N. Rolph, "Prophets, Kings, and Swords: The Sword of Laban and Its Possible Pre-Laban

Origin," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Spring 1993, pp. 73,75-76] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:16]

1 Nephi 4:9 The Hilt Thereof Was of Pure Gold . . . the Blade Thereof Was of the Most Precious Steel:

In referring to the sword of Laban, Nephi speaks of a hilt of "pure gold" and a blade of "the most precious steel" (1 Nephi 4:9). Hugh Nibley claims that such ceremonial swords and daggers with hilts of finely worked gold have been common in the Near East throughout historic times. Many exemplars from Egypt and Babylonia repose in our museums, but none is more famous or more beautiful than the fine steel dagger with its hilt of pure gold and finest workmanship, that was found on the person of the youthful King Tutankhamen. It has even been suggested that this dagger was one of those two sent many years before by King Dushratta of the Mitannin to the then reigning pharaoh as the most royal of gifts and described in a contemporary document as having hilts of gold and blades of steel. Nephi's term "precious steel" is interesting, for in his day real steel was far more precious than gold, being made possibly of meteoric iron and of superlative quality. The famous Damascus blades, of the finest steel the world has ever seen, were always made of meteoric iron, according to Jacob--an indication of very ancient origin. Even in modern Palestine swords and daggers have been "mostly of Damascus or Egyptian manufacture." No Arab prince to this day is ever seen in native dress without his *khanjar*, the long curved dagger of Damascus steel with its gorgeous hilt of gold. These ceremonial weapons are often heirlooms of great antiquity and immense value. At any time from the Amarna period (15th century B.C.) to the present, then, Laban would be required by the etiquette of the aristocratic east to carry just such a weapon as Nephi describes. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 108]



1 Nephi 4:9 **I beheld his [Laban's] sword (Illustration):** Dagger from King Tutankhamen's Tomb. [John W. Welch & J. Gregory Welch,, "Ancient Steel Daggers," in Charting the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., Chart 139].



King Tut's Dagger

egyking.info

1 Nephi 4:9 **Steel (Bronze):**

According to Hunter and Ferguson, it should be noted that references in the Old Testament to "steel" were, apparently, to the metal we now refer to as bronze. Prior to the eighteenth century there was no such word in English as "bronze." That copper-tin alloy was anciently referred to as "steel" to distinguish it from brass. Not until the eighteenth century did the English word "bronze" come into use. Thus, the King James translators necessarily rendered the Hebrew word "nechushah" (pronounced nekh-oo-shaw) as "steel," distinguishing it from "nechosheth" which is generally rendered "brass." The word "steel" is also used in the Book of Mormon on four occasions. (1 Nephi 4:9, 16:18; 2 Nephi 5:15; Ether 7:9) [Milton Hunter and Stuart Ferguson, (Ancient America and the Book of Mormon, p. 277) [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 3:3, Brass]

1 Nephi 4:9 **Steel:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, it is true enough that in most, if not in all, of the passages in the Old Testament where the English version has "steel" the original has a word that means "copper." But in Jeremiah 15:12, where the Prophet asks: "Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?" scholars have suggested that "the northern iron" may mean steel, while the "steel" mentioned is copper. In Nahum 2:4, where the prophet speaks of raging chariots that

seem like "torches," the word translated "torches" (paldah) should be rendered "steel."
[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 38]

1 Nephi 4:9 **Steel:**

According to Matthew Roper, many critics of the Book of Mormon have cited the mention of "steel" in 1 Nephi 4:9 as evidence against the Book of Mormon's historicity. "Steel," it is argued "was not known to man in those days."^{xxxviii} Today, however, it is increasingly apparent that the practice of "steeling" iron through deliberate carburization was well-known to the Near Eastern world from which the Lehi colony emerged. "It seems evident that by the beginning of the tenth century B.C. blacksmiths were intentionally steeling iron."^{xxxix} A carburized iron knife dating to the twelfth century B.C. is known from Cyprus.^{xxx} In addition to this,

A site on Mt. Adir in northern Israel has yielded an iron pick in association with 12th-century pottery. One would hesitate to remove a sample from the pick for analysis, but it has been possible to test the tip of it for hardness. The readings averaged 38 on the Rockwell "C" scale of hardness. This is a reading characteristic of modern hardened steel.^{xxxi}

Quenching, another method of steeling iron, was also known to Mediterranean blacksmiths during this period. "By the beginning of the seventh century B.C. at the latest the blacksmiths of the eastern Mediterranean had mastered two of the processes that make iron a useful material for tools and weapons: carburizing and quenching."^{xxxii} Archaeologists recently discovered a carburized iron sword near Jericho. The sword, which had a bronze haft, was one meter long and dates to the time of King Josiah, who would likely have been a contemporary of Lehi.^{xxxiii} Hershel Shanks recently described the find as "spectacular" since it is the only complete sword of its size and type from this period yet discovered in Israel.^{xxxiv}

[Matthew Roper, "Unanswered Mormon Scholars," in FARMS Review of Books, 9/1 1997, pp. 149-150] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 17:9]

1 Nephi 4:10 **I Was Constrained by the Spirit That I Should Kill Laban:**

According to John Tvedtnes, critics of the Book of Mormon point to Nephi's slaying of Laban in 1 Nephi 4 as evidence that the Book of Mormon is false. They contend that God would never have approved such an act. God's commandment to expel and destroy the wicked inhabitants of the land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:1-2) puts the lie to this kind of reasoning. More important are the legal issues behind Nephi's actions, discussed at length by John W. Welch ("Legal Perspectives on the Slaying of Laban," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (Fall 1992), 119-141). Among the evidences for justifying Nephi's actions, Welch refers to the

precedent of Moses' slaying of the Egyptian in Exodus 2.

An ancient rabbinic source sheds further light on Moses' actions. According to *Abot de Rabbi Nathan 20*, Moses summoned a court of ministering angels and asked them if he should kill the Egyptian, to which the angels responded "Kill him."^{xxxv} The same story is told in *Midrash Rabbah Exodus 1:29*, which adds that, before calling on the angels for counsel, Moses perceived that no righteous persons would descend from the Egyptian man.

A similar tale is told of David in the *Tosefta Targum* on 1 Samuel 17:43, where we read that, before killing Goliath, David looked up to heaven and saw the angels deliberating the fate of the giant. The Lord then expresses his will to David by telling him which stone to put in the sling. It should be noted that the story of David has other parallels with that of Nephi:

(1) Goliath and Laban were dressed in armor (1 Samuel 17:4-6; 1 Nephi 4:1);

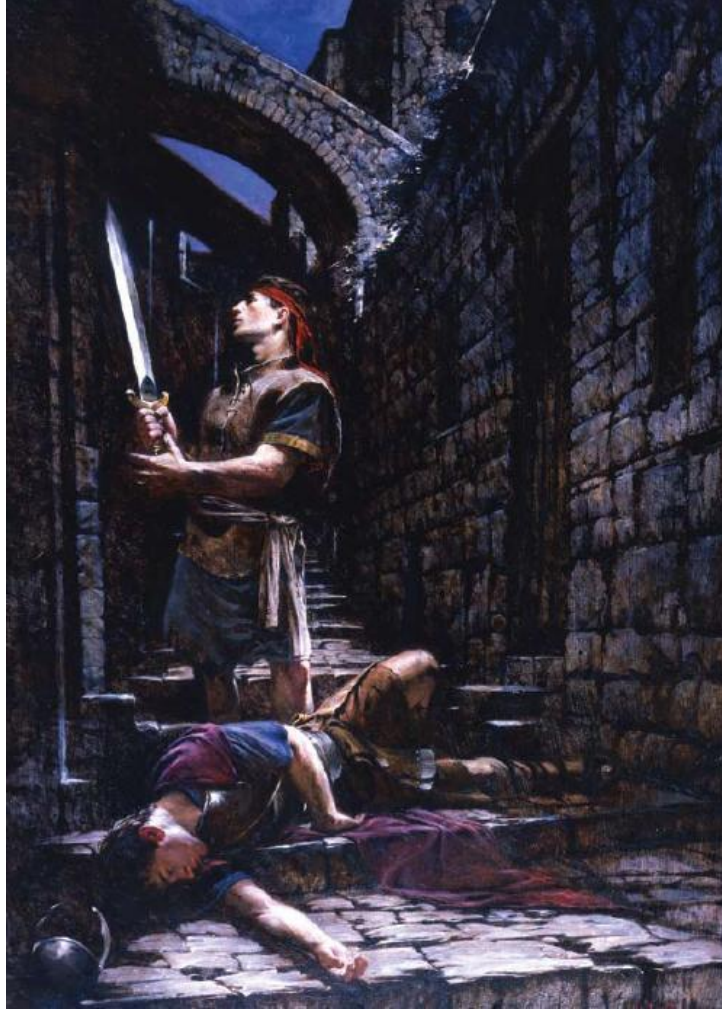
(2) David and Nephi cut off their adversaries heads with the man's own sword (1 Samuel 17:51; 1 Nephi 4:18);

(3) Both David and Nephi took the dead man's armor (1 Samuel 17:54; 1 Nephi 4:1); and

(4) David and Nephi each took the dead man's sword, which became a national treasure (1 Samuel 21:9; 22:10; 1 Nephi 4:21; 2 Nephi 4:14; Jacob 1:10; Words of Mormon 1:13; Mosiah 1:17; D&C 17:1).

[John A. Tvedtnes, "The Slaying of Laban," in The Most Correct Book, pp. 110-111]

1 Nephi 4:10 **I was constrained by the spirit that I should kill Laban (Illustration – not shown):** "I was constrained by the spirit that I should kill Laban: but I said in my heart: Never at any time have I shed the blood of man. And I shrunk and would that I might not slay him." [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1047]



Walter Rane (artist) whatdomormonsbelieve.com



mormonchronicle.com

1 Nephi 4:10 **I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban (Illustration):** Nephi Slaying Laban. Nephi was "constrained by the Spirit" to kill Laban. Artist: Scott Snow. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 12]

1 Nephi 4:10 **I Said in My Heart:**

The phrase "I said in my heart" is a Hebrew idiom for *I said to myself* (compare Ecclesiastes 3:17-18). [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 10]

1 Nephi 4:10 **I Shrunk and Would That I Might Not Slay Him:**

According to Verneil Simmons, Nephi argued with himself as to whether he was justified in killing Laban in order to secure the necessary record. Perhaps we can better understand Nephi's thinking at this crucial moment if we read a reference found in the Doctrine and Covenants. The ancient law commanded that three times one should forgive the enemy who came against him. But if the enemy should come a fourth time, then he was in the hands of the offended for judgment (D. & C. 95:5-6). Nephi knew that Laban had first threatened to kill Laman, then had attempted to kill all four of them when he saw the wealth they possessed. He knew Laban had robbed them of that treasure, and would try again to kill them if they came to accuse him. [Verneil W. Simmons, Peoples, Places and Prophecies, p. 68]

Cleon Skousen explains that Laban had violated three of the ten commandments. Coveting or lusting after other people's property with the intent of cheating them out of it is a direct violation of the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17). . . . Laban also ordered his servants

to pursue Nephi and his brethren for the purpose of killing them and obtaining their riches. Under the law he would have been held accountable as an "accessory" if not an actual principal in conspiring to commit both robbery (commandment #8 -- Exodus 20:15) and murder (commandment #6 -- Exodus 20:13).

[W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1040]

1 Nephi 4:10 **I Shrunk and Would That I Might Not Slay Him:**

Hugh Nibley notes that this account of Nephi slaying Laban in order to obtain the brass plates is always criticized. People say, "This is such a bloody thing that should never have happened. This shouldn't have been put in the Book of Mormon story." In response to this, brother Nibley relates the story of some Arabs which were in his Book of Mormon class. After lecturing them on the slaying of Laban, one of them by the name of Fayek Salim and another student came up to him and were really worried. They said, "Why did [Nephi] wait so long to cut off [Laban's] head? That was not according to Arab custom or behavior. It was his chance." Yet Nephi did wait a long time. He had a real struggle here, you'll notice.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 159]

1 Nephi 4:12 **Slay him for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands (Illustration – not shown):** Nephi Slays Laban. [Gary E. Smith, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, pp. 3,4]



1 Nephi 4:12 **The Spirit said unto me again: Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands (Illustration):** Laban Slain By His Own Sword. Artist: Ronald Crosby. [Mary Pratt Parrish, The Book of Mormon Story, p. 6]

1 Nephi 4:13 The Lord Slayeth the Wicked to Bring Forth His Righteous Purposes:

In a larger view, destruction of the wicked is an act of mercy. Paul speaks to this subject (1 Corinthians 5:5), as does Amulek in his teachings to Korihor (Alma 30:47) and to the Zoramites (Alma 34:8-16).

[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 10]

1 Nephi 4:13 It Is Better That One Man Should Perish:

It is intriguing that this phrase spoken to Nephi by the Spirit, "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" is the same phrase prophetically spoken by Caiaphas, the high priest, regarding Jesus (see John 11:49-52, "And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad").

[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 10]

Concerning the message of the Spirit to Nephi: "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13), John Welch and Heidi Parker produce recent research which shows that this "one for many" principle operated from a time much earlier in the Israelite culture.

Second Samuel is a pivotal example, King David sought the life of Sheba, a rebel guilty of treason. When Sheba took refuge in the city of Abel, the leader of David's army confronted the people of the city and demanded that Sheba be turned over to him. Rather than turn Sheba over, or face military destruction, the people of the city of Abel beheaded Sheba themselves. David's army then retreated. This episode became an important legal precedent justifying the killing of one person in order to preserve an entire group.

A second Old Testament case is preserved more fully in the Jewish oral tradition. It involved Jehoiakim, the king of Judah who rebelled against the Babylonian leader Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar demanded that the Jewish Council surrender Jehoiakim or the nation would be destroyed. Jehoiakim protested, "Do they set aside one life in favor of another?" Unmoved, the Jewish Council replied, "Did not your forefather do exactly that to Sheba ben Birchri?"^{xxxvi} Jehoiakim was subsequently given over to Nebuchadnezzar, who took him to Babylon (see 2 Chronicles 36:6), where presumably he was executed.

Because Zedekiah would become king of Judah less than four months later (see 2 Chronicles 36:9-10, and because the Book of Mormon story begins by mentioning "the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah" (1 Nephi 1:4), Nephi could have been very aware of the

"one for many" principle. . . .

Not only is this a point that few legal historians are aware of even today, but once again, Joseph Smith would have had no way of knowing. [John W. Welch and Heidi H. Parker, "Better That One Man Perish," FARMS Update, Number 118, in Insights an Ancient Window, June 1998, p. 2]

One might also wonder if Nephi interpreted the Spirit's "one for many" remark in a covenant perspective. In other words, because all covenant works are based on the atonement of Christ, and because Nephi received a covenant promise from the Lord just before embarking on the trip to retrieve the plates from Laban (see 1 Nephi 2:16-22), the Spirit might have been reminding Nephi of Christ's atonement ("it is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13). [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on Alma 30:47]

When Is It Better for One Man to Perish Than an Entire Nation?

	Five Conditions	Sheba 2 Samuel 20 ca. 100 B.C.	Jehoiakim 2 Kings 24 ca. 598 B.C.	Laban 1 Nephi 4 ca. 597 B.C.
1	Judgment issued by the recognized leader of Israel	David (king of Israel)	Nebuchadnezzar (king of Judah)	Jehovah (king of all)
2	Person already guilty of offense against the leader	rebellion	treason	disobedience
3	Person specifically identified for death	Sheba named	Jehoiakim named	Laban delivered
4	Those surrendering person are innocent	city of Abel innocent	the council innocent	Nephi innocent
5	People face inevitable destruction if they refuse to surrender person	city of Abel attacked by Joab	Jerusalem threatened	nation would perish
	Result	Sheba beheaded	Jehoiakim taken to Babylon and presumably executed	Laban beheaded

1 Nephi 4:13 **It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief (Illustration):** Chart: "When Is It Better for One Man to Perish Than an Entire Nation?" [John W. & J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching*, F.A.R.M.S., Chart #115]

1 Nephi 4:13 **It Is Better That One Man Should Perish:**

In 1 Nephi 4:13 the angel states that "it is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief." According to Kelly Ogden, the reader should compare this statement with the warning of Alma to Korihor: "Behold, it is better that thy soul should be lost than that thou shouldst be the means of bringing many souls down to destruction" (Alma 30:47). [D. Kelly Ogden, "Answering the Lord's Call," in *Studies in Scripture:*

1 Nephi 4:18 I Had Smitten Off His Head with His Own Sword:

Why did Nephi cut off the head of Laban? Wouldn't some other form of execution have been quicker and less gruesome for Nephi? Again, the smiting off of the head is a part of Hebrew culture. Beheading among these people was a testament against them of the judgments of God (see William Hamblin and Brent Merrill, *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, pp. 335-36) as quoted from a CES symposium talk given by John G. Scott, "The Miracle of First Nephi," 1997).

1 Nephi 4:18 I . . . Took Laban by the Hair of the Head, and I Smote off His Head with His Own Sword:

According to Daniel Rolph, it is interesting that in *Legends of the Jews* we find a similar story to that of Nephi and Laban. In that story a renegade prophet named Balaam sold out to the Moabites. He is specifically addressed by Phineas as an archetype for that "Aramaean Laban who tried to destroy our father Jacob," and, like the Laban of Nephi's time, this Laban/Balaam's head was struck off by Phineas with a special sword.^{xxxvii} Furthermore, this Phineas might also have been an archetype for Nephi, or for those Nephite prophets and kings descended from the tribe of Joseph. Phineas (or Phinehas), the grandson of Aaron (Exodus 6:25), considered to be a descendant of Levi, is traditionally stated to have descended also through the lineage of Joseph.^{xxxviii} Moses reportedly bestowed upon him the leadership of the people while the Israelites were fighting the Midianites of the trans-Jordan region, along with the ark of the covenant, the Urim and Thummim, and the gold plate of the mitre that rested on the high priest's forehead.

[Daniel N. Rolph, "Prophets, Kings, and Swords: The Sword of Laban and Its Possible Pre-Laban Origin," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Spring 1993, pp. 76-77] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 7 by Richard Anthony]

1 Nephi 4:19 I Took the Garments of Laban and Put Them upon Mine Own Body:

Nephi says that after he had smitten off Laban's head "with his own sword, [he] took the garments of Laban and put them upon [his] own body; yea, even every whit; and [he] did gird on [Laban's] armor about [his] loins" (1 Nephi 4:19). Now if Nephi was holding Laban by the hair while cutting the drunken man's head off, Nephi would have had a difficult time avoiding blood being splattered all over not only his own person, but all over Laban's as well. With Laban passed out in front of him, Nephi probably had time to ponder just what he would have to do in order to take full advantage of the situation. Anticipating the blood, Nephi might have stripped

the clothes off Laban *before* he cut off his head. Then, Nephi could have discarded his own blood-soaked clothes and put on the garments of Laban. Thus, the idea of Nephi putting on the garments of Laban fits into the picture in a very practical way.

But more than the practical aspect of this narrative, one should appreciate the covenant symbolism here. Raymond Treat says that in his book, *The Miracle of the Scarlet Thread*, Richard Booker outlines the steps ancient Hebrews typically followed in making a covenant. They exchanged robes and belts, A man's robe was symbolic of all his material possessions. . . . The ancient belts were weapons belts. Therefore, the message of giving one's belt was "all the power I have I now give to you. If necessary, I will defend you to the death." (Raymond C. Treat, "Understanding Our Covenant," in *Recent Book of Mormon Developments*, Vol. 2, pp. 34-35)

So the story of what happened to Laban might be representing the symbolic loss of covenant blessings through unrighteousness, and the bestowing of those blessings upon Nephi, who kept the covenant. Much of this covenant symbolism is highlighted in the textual headings that accompany *The Covenant Story*, however for the benefit of the reader, a quick review of the textual story from a covenant perspective is in order:

Nephi desires to know the mysteries of God and obediently desires the way of his father. He cries unto the Lord and the Lord visits him (1 Nephi 2:16-18).

The Lord covenants with Nephi and promises that if he is obedient he will be led to a promised land (1 Nephi 2:19-24).

Nephi returns to the tent of his father who is waiting for him with an errand from the Lord. Nephi is to return to Jerusalem to obtain the word of the Lord (the plates of brass). Nephi and Lehi, the Lord's servants, are obedient to their covenants and seek first to obtain the Lord's word. Nephi "knows" because of the covenants he has previously made with the Lord that the Lord will provide a way that he might accomplish this task. Nephi returns to Jerusalem where they are initially rejected by Laban (1 Nephi 3:1-18).

Nephi is willing to give all that he possesses in order to be faithful to his covenants with the Lord. He gathers up his gold and silver and precious things to exchange for the plates of brass but once again Laban rejects them and seeks their lives (1 Nephi 3:19-27).

Nephi's brethren rebel against Nephi, but an angel appears to proclaim Nephi's covenant calling to be a ruler over his brethren (1 Nephi 3:28-30).

Like Moses, Nephi is willing to give his life, if necessary, to honor the covenants he has made with the Lord. The Lord's way is mightier than all the earth. Nephi travels in darkness

with only the spirit of the Lord to guide him (1 Nephi 3:31--4:5).

Nephi comes across a "fallen" and "drunken" Laban. He is "constrained by the Spirit" to kill him but he hesitates. He is reminded of covenant law and Christ's covenant with his people. Nephi slays Laban "with his own sword" (1 Nephi 4:6-18)

Nephi clothes himself with Laban's covenant responsibilities regarding the records of Joseph (see above). He speaks in Laban's voice to Laban's servant. Nephi obtains the plates (1 Nephi 4:19-29).

Nephi promises with an oath to Laban's servant that those who hearken to the Lord's servant will have place with him. Nephi returns to the tent of his father (1 Nephi 4:30-38).

Upon witnessing Nephi's return, Lehi and Sariah confirm the covenant way to the promised land by offering their testimony and their sacrifices and burnt offering unto the Lord (1 Nephi 5:1-9).

Lehi and Nephi search the scriptures. They testify of their fathers. The scriptures are of great worth in their journey through the wilderness towards the promised land (1 Nephi 5:10-22).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 4:19 I Did Gird on His Armor:

Brant Gardner notes that after slaying Laban, Nephi dons Laban's clothing (even every whit) and Laban's armor. Nephi specifically says that he does this after severing Laban's head. Clearly there was a significant amount of blood. Wasn't Nephi worried about wearing obviously bloodstained clothes? Hugh Nibley says the following:

Laban was wearing armor, so that the only chance of dispatching him quickly, painlessly, and safely was to cut off his head--the conventional treatment of even petty criminals in the East . . . The donning of the armor was the natural and the shrewd thing for Nephi to do. A number of instances from the last war could be cited to show that a spy in the enemy camp is never so safe as when he is wearing the insignia of a *high* military official--providing he does not hang around too long, and Nephi had no intention of doing that. No one dares challenge "brig brass" too closely (least of all a grim and hot-tempered Laban): their business is at all times "top secret," and their uniform gives them complete freedom to come and to go unquestioned." (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pp. 99-100)

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi4.htm, pp. 8-9]

1 Nephi 4:20 **I Went Forth unto the Treasury of Laban:**

Nephi mentions that he "went forth unto the treasury of Laban" (1 Nephi 4:20) apparently without any help. Could Nephi have been familiar with the location of Laban's treasury? [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 3:3]

1 Nephi 4:20 **The Treasury of Laban:**

The brass plates had been kept in "the treasury of Laban," from which Nephi retrieved them (1 Nephi 4:20-24). According to John Tvedtnes, the concept of keeping books in a treasury, while strange to the modern mind, was a common practice anciently, and the term often denoted what we would today call a library. Ezra 5:17-6:2 speaks of a "treasure house" containing written records. The Aramaic word rendered "treasure" in this passage is *ginzayya*, from the root meaning "to keep, hide" in both Hebrew and Aramaic. Also from this root is the Mishnaic Hebrew word *g'nizah*, denoting a repository for worn synagogue scrolls, and *gannaz*, meaning "archivist," or one in charge of records. The Mandaean^{xxxix} word *ginza* has several meanings, one of which is "library."

[John Tvedtnes, The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books: Out of Darkness unto Light, pp. 155-156]

1 Nephi 4:20 **The Treasury of Laban:**

Jeff Lindsay notes that on Rabbi Yosef's "Jewishness of the Book of Mormon" internet maillist, an inquirer wondered if the mention of Laban's "treasury" in First Nephi made sense in the Hebrew and in ancient Israel. Rabbi Yosef's e-mail of April 27, 1998 explains that it makes excellent sense, being "exactly in keeping with the culture and language." "Treasury" in Hebrew is "genizah," a word also used for a room in ancient synagogues where scrolls were stored. By way of support, Rabbi Yosef explains:

The early "Church Father" Epiphanius, in his Panarion, section 30, relates the story of a Jew named Josephus (Yosef) who became a believer in Messiah after reading Hebrew copies of Acts and John which he found in a "genizah" (treasury) in Tiberias, Israel (Epiphanius; Panarion 30:3,6). You may also have heard of an archaeological find known as the "Cairo Genizah," in which such an ancient store room of scrolls was found in the remains of an ancient synagogue.

How many New York farmboys would have known about an ancient Jewish practice of storing sacred records in a "treasury"?

[Jeff Lindsay, "Laban's Treasury," Book of Mormon Evidences, [http://jefflindsay.com/BMEvidences.shtml, Jan. 7, 2001]

1 Nephi 4:20 **The Servant of Laban:**

According to Verneil Simmons, as Nephi approached the treasury he had the good fortune to meet Laban's steward who carried the keys to the room. Nephi described Zoram as the "servant of Laban" (1 Nephi 4:20) but we know at once that he was not a slave or a hired servant. He not only had the keys to the most important chamber in the house (1 Nephi 4:20) but he was also informed about the political situation in the city, and Laban's position of authority in it (1 Nephi 4:22,27). He immediately questioned Nephi, thinking him to be his master, concerning the business that had taken Laban out at night to consult with certain Jewish leaders (1 Nephi 4:22). Zoram must have been the trusted steward who had charge of Laban's household, one who was treated as a near-equal since he felt free to question Laban about his secret affairs. The role and position of the steward in a wealthy household is well documented by many ancient texts.

[Verneil W. Simmons, Peoples, Places and Prophecies, pp. 68-69] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 4:35; 5:13]

1 Nephi 4:20 **I Commanded Him in the Voice of Laban:**

According to Brant Gardner, the most suspect part of Nephi's disguise was certainly his own voice. In the dark, wearing the armor of Laban, he might be mistaken for Laban. But would that mistake be repeated when Nephi spoke to a servant who would surely know? . . . Yet Nephi endeavored to speak, and found that he spoke with Laban's voice. That experience would have even further supported his understanding that the Lord was behind his actions.

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, Book of Mormon Commentary, <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStoics/1Nephi/1Nephi4.htm>, p. 7]

Note* It should also verify to the reader that, symbolically, Nephi had been given the authority (or voice of Laban) as far as the records of Joseph's lineage were concerned. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 4:22 **The Elders of the Jews:**

Hugh Nibley notes that Nephi tells us casually but emphatically that things at Jerusalem were controlled by "the elders of the Jews," who were holding nocturnal meetings with the powerful and influential Laban (1 Nephi 4:22-27). Poor Zedekiah plays no part at all--his name occurs half a dozen times in the Book of Mormon but only to fix a date. These elders were no friends of Lehi; for if they had been, his life would never have been in danger. As it was, he "was driven out of Jerusalem" (Helaman 8:22; 1 Nephi 7:14) by the only people who could have driven him out, the important people, those responsible for the "priestcrafts and iniquities" that were to be the ruin of them at Jerusalem (2 Nephi 10:5).

Bible students recognize today that affairs at Jerusalem were completely under the control of the "elders." The word "elders" has been understood to mean the heads of the most influential families of a city. In 1935 in the ruins of the city of Lachish, 30 miles southward of Jerusalem, a remarkable body of documents was found. They were military reports written at the very time of the fall of Jerusalem and saved from the flames of burning Lachish by being covered with rubble when the watchtower in which they were stored collapsed. Lachish was the last Jewish town to fall before Jerusalem itself went down, so here, in the fragments of some eighteen letters, we have a strictly first-hand, if limited, account of what was going on.^{xi}

Now in the Lachish letters we learn that the men who are running--and ruining--everything are the *sarim*, who actually are the elders, the term designating, according to J. W. Jack, "members of the official class, i.e. 'officers' acting under the king as his counselors and rulers." In these priceless letters "we find the *sarim* denouncing Jeremiah to the king and demanding that he be executed because of his bad influence on the morale of the people." In accusing the prophet of defeatism, the leading men of Jerusalem were supported by the majority of the people and by a host of popular "prophets" suborned by the court, by whose false oracles "Judahite chauvinism" was "whipped to a frenzy." To oppose this front, as Lehi did, was to incur the charges of subversion and defeatism.^{xii}

(Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pp. 96-97) [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. 102-103]

1 Nephi 4:22 **The Elders of the Jews:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, the "elders of the Jews" (1 Nephi 4:22) were *shoterim*. The *shoterim* had special duties during time of war. In the first place, they were to explain to the conscripts that certain conditions exempted them from service. When the army was ready for organization, the "officers" appointed captains to lead them. It was further the duty of these "officers" to take messages from the commander-in-chief to the people. They

might be compared to the modern adjutant generals. [Reynolds and Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 40]

1 Nephi 4:25 **I Also Bade Him That He Should Follow Me:**

According to Brant Gardner, Nephi's requirement that Zoram should accompany him is perhaps unusual. Laban had gone forth alone previously in the night, and now Nephi (acting as Laban) requires that Zoram should accompany him. One would think that Nephi's greatest urge would be to leave without any further encumbrance. Nevertheless he brings Zoram along. Perhaps Nephi required assistance in carrying the plates, or at least assistance in carrying them should he be required to wield his sword in their defense.

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page," <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi4.htm>, p. 12]

1 Nephi 4:26 **The Brethren of the Church:**

Nephi writes that while impersonating Laban and in his conversations with Laban's servant Zoram, he apparently said things that caused Zoram to suppose that he "spake of the brethren of the church" (1 Nephi 4:26). This mention of a "church," which Laban was apparently a part of, raises some interesting questions. Was this "church" like our Church today? Was Lehi's family a part of this "church"? There is a statement by Bruce R. McConkie which has been quoted as follows:

"Was there a Church anciently, and if so, how was it organized and regulated? There was not so much as the twinkling of an eye during the whole so-called pre-Christian Era when the Church of Jesus Christ was not upon the earth, organized basically in the same way it now is. Melchizedek belonged to the Church; Laban was a member; so also was Lehi, long before he left Jerusalem.

There was always apostolic power. The Melchizedek Priesthood always directed the course of the Aaronic Priesthood. All of the prophets held a position in the hierarchy of the day" (Bruce R. McConkie, "The Bible, a Sealed Book," in *Supplement, a Symposium on the New Testament*, 1984, p. 6) as quoted in Book of Mormon Student Manual for Religion 121 and 122, pp. 5-6]

Questions arise from this quote, not from what is said but in how it is understood:

(1) Was the organization of the "church" (mentioned in 1 Nephi 4:26) the same church to which Lehi belonged? The answer is "Yes," and "No." Although one of the definitions for the word "church" is "a particular sect, denomination, or division of Christians," there is another definition which means "the ecclesiastical government of a particular religious group, or its

power, as opposed to secular government" (Webster's New World Dictionary). We might assume that among the Jews of Lehi's day, there was no separation of church and state, but is our assumption correct? How do we account for the fact that the lives of the chosen prophets of God, Jeremiah and Lehi, were sought by the government authorities? (See Jeremiah 11:18-23; 18:18; 1 Nephi 1:20). If Laban's "church" was composed of the Jewish ecclesiastical and governmental authorities, then in fact, Lehi and his family were part of that "church" also. To understand the other answers, it is necessary to lay a little more groundwork.

(2) What is an apostle, or apostolic power? According to Bruce R. McConkie, "An *apostle* is a special witness of the name of Christ who is sent to teach the principles of salvation to others. He is one who knows of the divinity of the Savior by personal revelation and who is appointed to bear testimony to the world of what the Lord has revealed to him." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 46). Again, both Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:1-19) and Lehi (1 Nephi 1:5-19) were special witnesses of the Lord, but were the ecclesiastical and governmental authorities of the Jews in agreement with their message? Was Laban in agreement with their message? I don't think so. (see Jeremiah 26:10-11; 1 Nephi 1:19-20.)

(3) In what way did the Melchizedek Priesthood direct the Aaronic Priesthood in the time of Lehi? According to another dictionary, "*ekklesia* [the Greek word for 'church'] was also used among the Jews (LXX) for the 'congregation' of Israel which was constituted at Sinai and assembled before the Lord at the annual feasts in the persons of its representative males (Acts 7:38)." (*The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, p. 283)

According to Cleon Skousen, we should remember that Moses received *two* sets of laws. The *first* law which was given to Moses was the Law of the Covenant, which prevails whenever the government of God is upon the earth. This Law was on the first set of stone tablets given to Moses and included all the higher ordinances of the Gospel--even the temple endowment (D&C 84:21-24, plus *Inspired Version*, Exodus 34:1). When Moses came down from the mount and found the people indulging in the fertility rites of the Egyptians (with several thousand of them naked, drunken and dancing around the fertility symbol of a golden bullock), he smashed the tablets on which the higher laws were written (Exodus 32:19; Deuteronomy 9:17). The Lord then had Moses make a second set of tablets which provided a lower order of laws designed to be a schoolmaster to the children of Israel so they could at least survive as a people until Christ came. (See Galatians 3:19,24) This became known as "the Law of Moses" or the "law of carnal commandments." It should be remembered, however, that this was the *second* "law of Moses." [W. Cleon Skousen, *Treasures from the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 2, p. 2036]

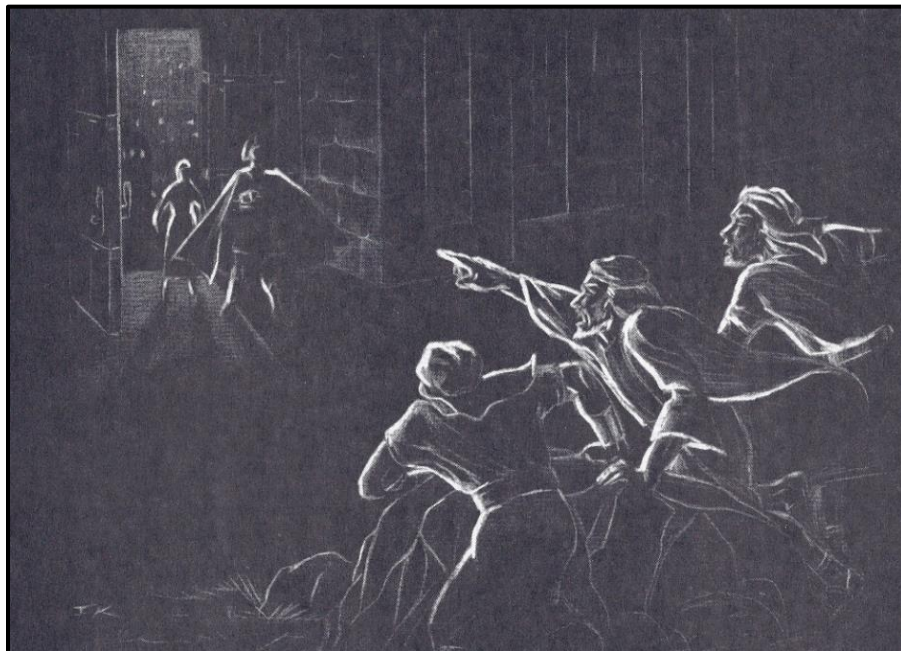
According to Bruce R. McConkie, through Moses the Lord attempted to set up the house of Israel as a kingdom of priests of the holy order, with each man and his family enjoying the full blessings of the patriarchal order and priesthood (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6). But Israel rebelled, rejected the higher law, and the Lord took Moses and the fulness of the priesthood from them (*Inspired Version*, Exodus 34:1-2; D & C 84:17-25). From then until the personal ministry of our Lord among men, the Aaronic Priesthood continued as the most prevalent

authority of God on earth (D & C 84:26-28).

There were many times, however, and may have been at all times, prophets and worthy men in Israel who held the Melchizedek Priesthood. Joseph Smith said, "All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself," that is, those persons so honored held their authority by special dispensation, for the general priesthood rule found among the people was the Levitical order (*Teachings*, p. 181; *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 3, pp. 80-102).

Regarding this Melchizedek Priesthood, McConkie quotes Joseph Smith, "All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood. . . . The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things" (*Teachings*, p. 322). [Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 477-478]

Thus, the answer to how Lehi and Laban both belonged to the same Church of Christ, to how the basic organization of the Church was the same as in all dispensations, and how the Melchizedek Priesthood directed the Aaronic Priesthood lies in responsibility to proper authority. In other words, it was the obligation of every Jew to follow the presiding authority of the day, which authority was held by the prophets. Both Lehi and Laban were under obligation through Levitical covenants to follow the direction of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Lehi responded and was saved. Laban rejected the authority and was destroyed. [See the commentary on Mosiah 18:17 and Mosiah 25:19,23 for further discussion on the idea of a "church" among the Nephites]



1 Nephi 4:28 **When Laman saw me he was exceedingly frightened, and also Lemuel and Sam**
(Illustration): "Laman, Lemuel, and Sam were deeply frightened when they saw Nephi suddenly appear before them dressed in the armour of Laban and accompanied by Laban's servant." [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1051]

1 Nephi 4:28 **Fled From Before My Presence:**

Allen & David Richardson and Anthony Bentley note that the Book of Mormon makes use of the authentic Hebrew usage of two prepositions that introduce a single prepositional phrase. For example, 1 Nephi 4:28 tells of some that "fled from before my presence." Jacob 5:30 indicates that "the servant went down into the vineyard." Also in Mosiah 7:6 "they went down into the land of Nephi." Mormon 2:24 speaks of those who "did not flee from before the Lamanites." Angela Crowell cites the following observation by William Gesenius:

Hebrew syntax calls for compound prepositions rather than the single preposition common in English. This usage is traced back to the literal translation of the Hebrew text.

Compound prepositions are used to indicate the location and direction of the action as well as the action itself. (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 377, cited by Crowell in "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," *Zarahemla Record*, p. 4:)^{xiii}

The example "from before" is a literal translation of the Hebrew words *mippene* and *milliphen*. The writer found that it was used twenty-three times in the Old Testament Hebrew text, but that it was translated into English (KJV & IV) only four times (for example, Genesis 23:4; Exodus 4:3; 1 Chronicles 11:13; Judges 11:23). The other verses all translate it "from," giving us a more precisely worded English sentence, even though in the Hebrew text it reads, "from before." It would have been quite difficult for Joseph Smith to have copied this Hebraism from the King James Version of the Bible when the construct only appears four times in the entire English text. Yet there are at least ten instances where the combination "from before" is found in the Book of Mormon. In this instance, the Book of Mormon contains a Hebraism "more literally" translated than its counterpart from the King James Version of the Bible. How can we account for this? It is remote that Joseph Smith on his own would have been able to identify this construct as a Hebraism. Rather, we see original Hebraic authorship and a correct translation through divine aid. [Allen H. Richardson, David E. Richardson, and Anthony E. Bentley, *Voice from the Dust-500 Evidences Supporting the Book of Mormon*, p. 267]

Note* The phrase "from before" is actually found at least 21 times: 1 Nephi 4:28, 30; 11:12, 29; 20:19; 2 Nephi 9:8; Mosiah 17:4; Alma 2:32; 44:12; 3 Nephi 4:12; 9:5,7,8,9,11; Mormon 2:24,25; 4:20,22; Ether 13:22; Moroni 9:15. [Alan C. Miner, *Personal Notes*]

1 Nephi 4:32 **As the Lord Liveth, and As I Live:**

George Lamsa describes a similarly binding oath:

"I have lifted up my hand" is an Eastern saying which means "I have sworn before God." Easterners, when taking an oath, lift their hands toward heaven and invoke the name of God, whom they make a witness of the oath," . . . as a faithful witness in heaven" (see Psalms 89:37; 1 Samuel 12:5).

When treaties and agreements were made in the name of God they were generally respected and kept even by the future generation. Other treaties and covenants were easily broken and repudiated, just as they are broken today (see Joshua 9:18). (George M. Lamsa, *Old Testament Light*. Harper & Row, 1964, p. 44)

[As quoted by Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page," <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi4.htm>, p. 14]

1 Nephi 4:33 I Spake unto Him, Even with an Oath, That He Need Not Fear:

When Zoram saw Nephi's brethren and heard Nephi's real voice he got the shock of his life and in a panic made a break for the city. Hugh Nibley tells us that in such a situation there was only one thing Nephi could possibly have done, both to spare Zoram and to avoid giving alarm--and no westerner could have guessed what it was. Nephi, a powerful fellow, held the terrified Zoram in a vice-like grip long enough to swear a solemn oath in his ear, "as the Lord liveth, and as I live" (1 Nephi 4:32), that he would not harm him if he would listen. Zoram immediately relaxed, and Nephi swore another oath to him that he would be a free man if he would join the party: "Therefore, if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us" (1 Nephi 4:34).

The Oath of Power: What astonishes the western reader is the miraculous effect of Nephi's oath on Zoram, who upon hearing a few conventional words promptly becomes tractable, while as for the brothers, as soon as Zoram "made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth . . . our fears did cease concerning him" (1 Nephi 4:35, 37).

The reaction of both parties makes sense when one realizes that the oath is the one thing that is most sacred and inviolable among the desert people and their descendants: "Hardly will an Arab break his oath, even if his life be in jeopardy," for "there is nothing stronger, and nothing more sacred than the oath among the nomads," and even the city Arabs, if it be exacted under special conditions. "The taking of an oath is a holy thing with the Bedouins," says one authority, "Wo to him who swears falsely; his social standing will be damaged and his reputation ruined. No one will receive his testimony, and he must also pay a money fine."

But not every oath will do. To be most binding and solemn an oath should be by the life of something, even if it be but a blade of grass. The only oath more awful than that "by my life" or (less commonly) "by the life of my head," is the *wa hayat Allah* "by the life of God," or "as the Lord liveth," the exact Arabic equivalent of the ancient Hebrew *hai Elohim*. . . . So we see that the only way that Nephi could possibly have pacified the struggling Zoram in an instant was to utter the one oath that no man would dream of breaking, the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite: "As the Lord liveth, and as I live!" [Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 109-111]

1 Nephi 4:34 **Thou Shalt Have Place with Us:**

According to Hugh Nibley, when Nephi urged the frightened Zoram to join the party in the desert, he said: "If thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us" (1 Nephi 4:34). The correctness of the proposal is attested not only by the proper role of Lehi in receiving members and guests into the tribe but also in the highly characteristic expression, "thou shalt *have place* with us." For since time immemorial the proper word of welcome to the stranger who enters one's tent has been *ahlan wa sahlan wa marhaban*, literally [perhaps], "a family, a smooth place, and a wide place!" [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 52] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 4:20; 5:13]

1 Nephi 4:34 **If Thou [Zoram] Wilt Go down into the Wilderness to My Father Thou Shall Have Place with Us:**

According to Hugh Nibley, when you are fleeing from the enemy and you go to a great skeikh's tent, you go in and kneel and put the Kaf (hem) of his garment on your shoulder (a figure we find very clear in the Book of Mormon), and you say, "*Ana dakhiluka*, I am your suppliant." He is obliged then to say, "Have a place; have a family; have a share in our tent." You are taken in. People move over so you have a place to sit down, and then you are a member. Nephi says the same thing in verse 34: "Therefore if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us." [Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 162] [See the commentary on 2 Nephi 1:15 for the idea of the Lord wrapping us in his robes of righteousness and saying in essence, "I have a place for you." See also the commentary on Alma 5:25]

1 Nephi 4:35 **Now Zoram Was the Name of the Servant:**

Gordon Thomasson hypothesizes that Zoram was a Levite refugee from the Northern Kingdom, attached to Laban's household through generations of service (not servitude) to his tribe, thus accounting for his (ritual?) responsibility for keeping the plates and the appearance of what are possibly Levitical ordinances in Lehi's camp and colony prior to their joining with the Mulekites. This heritage could also account for the liturgical innovation found among the Zoramites. [Gordon C. Thomasson, "What's in a Name? Book of Mormon Language, Names, and [Metonymic] Naming," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Volume 3, Number 1 (Spring 1994), p. 16 n. 22]

1 Nephi 4:36 He Should Tarry with Us . . . That the Jews Might Not Know Concerning Our Flight:

After swearing an oath to Zoram that he would be safe if he went with them to the tent of their father Lehi, Nephi makes an interesting statement: "Now we were desirous that he should tarry with us for this cause, that the Jews might not know concerning our flight into the wilderness, lest they should pursue us and destroy us" (1 Nephi 4:36).

Brant Gardner asks, How could Zoram have known where to find Lehi? It appears that Lehi followed fairly well known and traveled trade routes for at least the early part of his journey. Having left a particular gate of Jerusalem, the direction to the trade route may have been obvious. Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "[http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1 Nephi/1 Nephi4.htm](http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi4.htm), p. 15]

1 Nephi 4:38 We . . . Journeyed unto the Tent of Our Father:

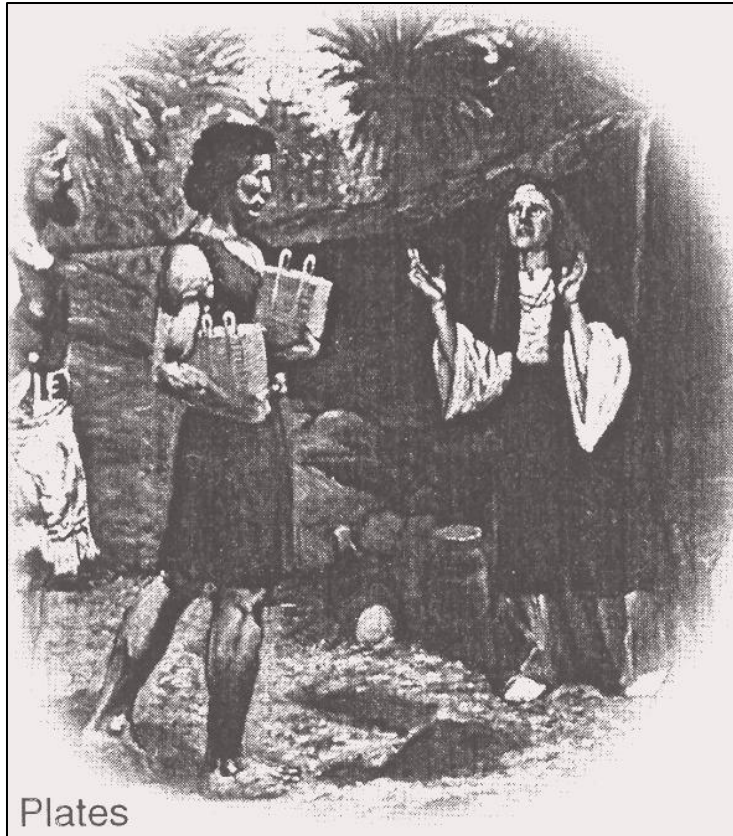
The Hiltons discovered three routes out of Jerusalem (see illustration), each of which would have taken Nephi and his brethren to the city of Aqaba (formerly called Ezion-geber), which was the only way to the Arabian side of the Red Sea (the proposed location of the "tent of our father" -- 1 Nephi 4:38):

(1) One route went east from Jerusalem to Jericho through the bleak Judean wilderness, then crossed the Jordan River and went up and joined the King's Highway, going down the east bank of the Dead Sea through the towns of Madaba, Karak, and Petra to Aqaba, all of which are in the present-day Kingdom of Jordan. . . . This route was well-known even 800 years before Lehi; Moses mentioned it in asking permission to proceed along it with the host of Israel without turning "to the right hand nor to the left" on their way to Canaan (Numbers 20:17; 21:22). Although Nephi and his brethren would probably not have been in danger on this route, they would almost certainly have been delayed and taxed at each border as they passed through the kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom.

(2) Another possible route leaves Jerusalem and goes south to Hebron, continues southwest to Beersheba, then goes down Wadi al 'Araba to Aqaba at the Red Sea.

(3) The third route goes east from Jerusalem on the same road as the first route, turns south just before Jericho, passes the Dead Sea on the west, continues past the caves and cliffs of Qumran, and then through the Wadi al 'Araba to emerge at Aqaba. Nephi and his brethren could have traveled the entire distance without crossing an international border, for the road all lay within Judea until after Aqaba. Even though this route exposed Nephi and his brethren to the Jewish government security forces longer, it was the shortest and fastest way to the Red Sea, which was their goal.

[Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, Discovering Lehi, pp. 19-20] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 2:5 for additional routes]



1 Nephi 4:38 **We took the plates of brass . . . and journeyed unto the tent of our father (Illustration – not shown):** Nephi Returns with Plates [Gary E. Smith, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 3]

Geographical Theory Map: 1 Nephi 4:38 Nephi Journeys to the Tent of His Father (Year 001)

1 Nephi 5:2 **She Had Supposed That We Had Perished in the Wilderness:**

Nephi records that when he and his brethren did not return on time from their trip to Jerusalem to recover the brass plates from Laban, their mother, Sariah, "had supposed that [they] had perished in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 5:2). Despite the life-threatening happenings that Nephi and his brethren had to endure at the hands of Laban, it is interesting to note here that it was the dangers of the wilderness that Sariah was keenly afraid of. George Potter notes that the land of Midian in the northwest corner of Saudi Arabia is a wilderness second only in barrenness to the great Rub'al Khali, or Empty Quarter, of the central Arabian Peninsula. Hardly a blade of grass breaks up the monotony of the terrain. Temperatures average between 115° and 125° Fahrenheit during the summer months. During the springtime in Arabia, day time temperatures are over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Survival experts advise downed pilots in the desert to first find shelter from the heat, then look for water, and finally to seek food. The

Arabian sun will kill a man within hours if he cannot find shade.

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 71]



Nafud Desert

[flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/14811170@N00/10000000000/)



1 Nephi 5:2 **She had supposed that we had perished in the wilderness (Illustration):** Northern border of Arabia, the red sands of the great Nafud desert and the barren plains of the former Midian region.

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 10]

1 Nephi 5:2 **She Had Supposed That We Had Perished in the Wilderness:**

Facing the potential loss of all four of her sons, Sariah had "complained" against Lehi, for

"she had supposed that [they] had perished in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 5:2). According to Camille Fronk, it was one thing for Sariah to leave a comfortable lifestyle, but quite another to have her most precious blessing torn from her. Children were the focus of life for women in ancient Israel (see Psalms 127:3; 128:3). Only in their roles as mothers did Israelite women receive honor and authority. "The [Israelite] woman's primary and essential role within the family . . . accounts for her highest personal and social reward."^{xliii} More specifically, being a mother of sons created a woman's greatest source of joy and comfort. Sons were seen as a particular blessing not only because they could defend the family in the face of opposition, but because they promised a continuation of the family name.^{xliii} A reciprocal love was typical among the sons of these mothers. Charles A. Doughty, a 19th-century British explorer who made the *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca) by traveling by camel through some of the same deserts that Lehi's family traveled, observed that among Bedouin women "the grown son has a tender regard toward his mother, . . . before the teeming love even of his fresh young wife" and could be depended on to welcome his mother as matron in his tent should something happen to her husband.^{xliii} This relationship may partially explain why Nephi spoke more of his mother than of his wife.

Such strong family ties made the tragedy of losing a son especially traumatic--almost insurmountably devastating if a mother like Sariah were to lose all of her sons at one time. Centuries after Sariah's time, but within a similar desert cultural tradition, Doughty encountered a woman who attempted to offer him an armful of fresh produce while pleading,

I have lost my children, one after [the] other, four sons, and for the last I besought my Lord that He would leave me this child, but he died also . . . and he was come almost to manly age. And there are times when this sorrow so taketh me, that I fare like a madwoman; but tell me, O stranger, hast thou no counsel in this case? And as for me I do that which thou seest,--ministering to the wants of others--in hope that my Lord, at the last, will have mercy upon me.^{xliii}

Coupled with this profound motherly love was Sariah's knowledge of specific dangers awaiting her sons in Jerusalem. Many Jerusalem men holding positions of power had a vendetta against "the prophets" who vehemently warned against resistance to the Babylonians (see 1 Nephi 7:14-15).^{xliii} We can therefore understand some of Sariah's fears when her sons did not return from Jerusalem in the time frame she anticipated. So again we ask, why did the Lord inspire Nephi to include this incident in his narrative? Obviously, Nephi's intent was not to demean his mother, nor to lead readers to write her off as a faithless murmurer. It is noteworthy that Nephi was not personally present to witness Sariah's fears, but he recorded her experience as among those "things which are pleasing unto God" (1 Nephi 6:5). [Camille Fronk, "Desert Epiphany: Sariah & the Women in 1 Nephi," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, FARMS, pp. 9-11, 80] [See the rest of the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:2]

Note* Does the word "complained" as it is applied to Sariah imply something different than the word "murmur" as it is applied to Laman and Lemuel? [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 5:2 **Behold Thou Hast Led Us Forth from the Land of Our Inheritance . . . and . . . and:**

According to Richard Rust, the skillful use of repetition in the Book of Mormon as a principle of reinforcement and witness can be appreciated by close examination of various narrative threads woven by Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni. An excellent example of this repetition can be found in 1 Nephi 5, starting with Nephi's reference to Sariah's lament:

For she [Sariah] had supposed that we had perished in the wilderness; and she also had complained against my father, telling him that he was a visionary man; saying:

(1) Behold thou has led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and

(2) my sons are no more, and

(3) we perish in the wilderness. (1 Nephi 5:2, emphasis added)

In Nephi's narrative, Sariah's worries are counterbalanced six verses later by her three-part witness uttered at the return of her sons:

Now (1) I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and

(2) I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and

(3) given them power whereby *they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them*. (1 Nephi 5:8)

The reader should note that Sariah's final statement reinforces and echoes Nephi's initial covenant commitment: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandment unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them *that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them*." (1 Nephi 3:7)

With this covenant relationship in mind, we now view Lehi and Nephi (and Sariah) as they rejoice that they had:

(1) *kept the commandments*,

(2) obtained from Laban the *records* which the Lord had commanded, and

(3) now could *preserve the commandments* of the Lord unto their children (1 Nephi 5:20-21)

[Richard D. Rust, "Recurrence in Book of Mormon Narratives," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 3, Num. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 46-47] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 3:7; 1 Nephi 5:4; 1 Nephi 5:8; 3 Nephi 14:23]

1 Nephi 5:3 **After This Manner of Language Had My Mother Complained Against My Father:**

According to Kevin and Shauna Christensen, the story of Sariah's complaint and testimony deserves a closer reading than it has received thus far:

And it came to pass that after we had come down into the wilderness unto our father, behold, he was filled with joy, and also my mother, Sariah, was exceedingly glad, for she truly had mourned because of us. For she had supposed that we had perished in the wilderness; and she also had complained against my father, telling him that he was a visionary man; saying: Behold thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are no more, and we perish in the wilderness. And after this manner of language had my mother complained against my father. (1 Nephi 5:1-3)

At first glance, we might want to dismiss this part of the story as a negative image, since it depicts Sariah as "complaining." But in structuring the account, Nephi starts with the end, highlighting her gladness and joy in contrast to her mourning over her sons and sacrifices. This shows that his focus is not on the fact that she complained, but on the outcome of the experience. Nephi recognizes the validity of both her fears and her joy. Of all the stories he could tell about his mother, why does he give the most space to this one? Sensitized by readings on allusion and type-scenes by Alan Goff^{xlviii} and Robert Alter,^{xlix} we should hear an echo of the account of the widow of Zarephath and Elijah in 1 Kings 17:9-24. Like Sariah, the widow had been asked by a servant of God to sacrifice all her material goods and subsequently seems to have lost her son. She too complains and the prophet recognizes the validity of her concerns. He offers no rebuke; instead, Elijah prays to the Lord on her behalf. Lehi's response to Sariah is just as exemplary (see 1 Nephi 5:4-6).

In 1 Nephi 5:4-6, Lehi *comforts* Sariah; he does not rebuke her or belittle or dismiss her concerns. The story continues (see 1 Nephi 5:7-8) in a way that strengthens the association between Sariah and the widow, and, by extension between Lehi and Elijah as servants of God. The allusion to the story of Elijah is confirmed on comparing Sariah's response to the delivery of her sons and the restoration of the widow's son. Sariah "spake saying: Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them." The widow says, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:24). The comparison makes Lehi an Elijah in the same

way that biblical stories of Elisha parallel Elijah's acts and demonstrate that Elisha was Elijah's successor. So, of all the stories Nephi could choose to tell about his mother, he chooses one that "likens" her to an exemplary woman in the scriptures.

[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. 21-22]

1 Nephi 5:4 **I Know That I Am a Visionary Man:**

In 1 Nephi 5:4, Lehi states: "I know that I am a visionary man; for if I had not seen the things of God in a vision I should not have known the goodness of God." John Tvedtnes notes that Lehi is three times referred to as "a visionary man" (1 Nephi 2:11; 5:2, 4). The term does not appear in the King James Version of the Bible, but is nonetheless authentic. It is the Hebrew word *hozeh*, the active participle of the root from which derive the words *hazon* and *hizzayon*, "vision."^{li} In each case, the King James Version translates the term as "seer," which is the same as the KJV rendering for *ro'eh* (from the verb *to see*).^{li}

Both Hebrew roots have the verbal meaning of "to see," but it is likely that *hozeh* is behind the Book of Mormon term *visionary man*, while *ro'eh* is probably the word behind *seer* in 2 Nephi 3:6-7, 11, 14 and Mosiah 8:13-17. The latter passage, along with Mosiah 28:13-16 and Joseph Smith History 1:35, indicates that the term *seer* was used by the Nephites to designate one who had power to use the interpreters, which have come to be known to us as the Urim and Thummim.

[John A. Tvedtnes, "A Visionary Man," in Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., 1999, pp. 29-30] [See the commentary on Mosiah 28:20]

1 Nephi 5:5 **Behold, I Have Obtained a Land of Promise:**

Angela Crowell explains that in Hebrew thinking, an action is regarded as being either completed or incompleting. Hebrew, therefore, knows no past, present, or future tenses, but instead a Perfect and an Imperfect [form]. . . . The Hebrew Perfect [form] may be taken to represent action in the past (Weingreen 1959:56-57). The prophetic perfect [form] is a common usage in the language of the prophets. The prophet so transports his mind ahead "that he describes the future event as if it had been already seen or heard by him." This happens often in making promises or threats and also in the language of contracts. A good example is found in 1 Nephi 5:5, "But behold, I *have obtained* a land of promise . . ." The reader should note that this phrase was spoken while Lehi was still in the wilderness by the Red Sea. [Angela M. Crowell, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," in Recent Book of Mormon Developments, Vol. 2, p. 7]

Note* Prophetic language is also covenant language. It is interesting that the idea of

obtaining "a land of promise" was a covenant blessing not only for Lehi but for Nephi. So when did Nephi make any covenants with the Lord? Before Nephi ever accepted the task of recovering the plates of Laban. He says:

"having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me . . . And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart, And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands." (1 Nephi 2:16, 19-20)

Nephi then says that he returned to the tent of his father (1 Nephi 3:1) where Lehi was waiting with a commandment of the Lord to "seek the records and bring them down hither into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 3:4). It is then that Nephi said his famous words, which have been quoted as an example of faith, but are in actuality much more. They are an affirmation of a covenant with the Lord:

"I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I *know* that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them." (1 Nephi 3:7)

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 2:20; 1 Nephi 17:36-38; 2 Nephi 1:5; Ether 2:8] [See the commentary on Mosiah 15:12; 1 Nephi 31:8]

1 Nephi 5:8 **I Know of a Surety:**

The words of Nephi: "I know" (1 Nephi 3:7), and of Lehi: "I know" (1 Nephi 5:4), and of Sariah: "Now I know of a surety" (1 Nephi 5:8) might not just be representative of simple faith, but a genuine witness to a covenant relationship with the Lord, and the power of His covenant word both in person and in written record to preserve them and their posterity while journeying in the wilderness to the promised land. Can we liken this to (1) the sign of the covenant; and (2) the sure sign of the covenant? If the words "I know" are covenant words, did Sariah also make a covenant with the Lord similar to Lehi and Nephi? Or is Sariah's covenant with the Lord implicit in Lehi's covenant? In other words, had Sariah covenanted to obey her husband as he obeyed the covenant he had made with the Lord? When Nephi says "after this manner of language had my mother complained against my father" (1 Nephi 5:3), is he referring to covenant related language? [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary of 1 Nephi 1:3; 1 Nephi 3:7; 1 Nephi 5:2; 3 Nephi 14:23; 1 Nephi 5:4]



1 Nephi 5:8 **Now I know of a surety (Illustration):** Sariah's Epiphany. Artist: John S. Lepinski. [Camille Fronk, "Desert Epiphany: Sariah & the Women in 1 Nephi," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, FARMS, p. 4] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:2]

1 Nephi 5:9 **They Did Rejoice Exceedingly, and [They] Did Offer Sacrifice and Burnt Offerings unto the Lord:**

In 1 Nephi 5:9, Nephi writes: "And it came to pass that *they* did rejoice exceedingly, and did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and *they* gave thanks unto the God of Israel." Camille Fronk notes that Nephi reported that "they" offered the sacrifice. Since Nephi was writing in the first person, he tells us that he was not included as a primary participant in the ordinance. The context suggests that Lehi and Sariah together performed this sacred act of worship. One can feel the renewed personal commitment that Sariah reverently placed on the altar alongside the animal sacrifice. And, most important, there is no indication that Sariah ever "complained" again.

[Camille Fronk, "Desert Epiphany: Sariah & the Women in 1 Nephi," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, FARMS, p. 11] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:2]

1 Nephi 5:9 **They . . . Did Offer Sacrifice and Burnt Offerings:**

Under the Deuteronomic Code a man could offer sacrifice for his own family, even though he was not of the tribe of Levi. Elkanah, an Ephraimite, in 1 Samuel 1:3-4 went yearly to "sacrifice unto the Lord" at Shiloh. Gideon of the tribe of Manasseh, built an altar and offered

burnt offerings at the command of the Lord (Judges 6:24-26).
[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 12]

1 Nephi 5:10 **The Records Which Were Engraven upon the Plates of Brass:**

Are there any evidences of records which were engraven on metal plates such as were "the plates of brass" ? (see 1 Nephi 5:10) While the brass plates might have required a knowledge of Egyptian to read them (see Mosiah 1:4), the records primarily concerned the history of the Israelites. According to William Hamblin, specific Hebrew examples of writing on metal plates are relatively limited in number, but clearly attest to the practice. For example:

(1) The oldest example of Hebrew writing on metal is the engraved gold plate attached to the front of the turban of the high priest. According to Exodus 28:36, Moses was ordered to "make a plate (tzitz) of pure gold, and engrave upon it as an engraved seal (khotem), "Holy to Yahweh."

(2) Excavations in the late 1970's uncovered First Temple period tombs at Ketef Hinnom, near Jerusalem. Among the artifacts discovered in this dig were two small silver plates dating to the seventh century B.C., containing the priestly benedictions found in Numbers 6:24-26 and representing "the earliest known fragments of the biblical text."

(3) In 161 B.C. Judas Maccabaeus concluded a treaty with the Romans which "the Romans engraved on bronze tables and sent to Jerusalem for the Jews to keep there as a record" (1 Maccabees 8:22). Josephus' account states, however, that the Jews themselves engraved the document in bronze. In his analysis of this incident Jonathan Goldstein concludes that since there are no other known instances of Romans *sending* bronze treaties to their allies (as opposed to keeping copies of the treaties on bronze plates in Rome), Josephus' account is probably more accurate. Later, in 140 B.C., when Simon was proclaimed by the Jews as both high priest and prince, "they ordered that this text [of Simon's privileges and responsibilities] be drawn up on bronze tablets and set up in the precinct of the sanctuary [of the temple] in a conspicuous place and that copies of the tablets be placed in the treasury [of the temple] so as to be available for Simon and his sons." These examples clearly indicate that, following the common practice of most other cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, the Jews kept records of important historical documents on bronze plates in their temple.

(4) The most well-known example of Hebrew writing on metal plates is the famous Copper Scroll (3C15) from Qumran (1st Century A.D.), containing a list of hidden temple treasures.

The evidence leaves no doubt that the Hebrews had a longstanding tradition dating at least to the First Temple period (well before 587 B.C.) of writing sacred texts on metal plates for

amulets, inscriptions, and literary documents.

[William J. Hamblin, "Sacred Writings on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean," F.A.R.M.S., 1994, p. 2]

1 Nephi 5:10 **He Did Search (the Plates of Brass) from the Beginning:**

In view of the visions that followed directly after Lehi (and Nephi) searched the plates of brass "from the beginning" (1 Nephi 5:10), Lehi and Nephi probably received their visions while pondering, studying, and trying to convey the message of the brass plates to others. The visions that followed these scriptures undoubtedly added to their spiritual insight and made them great teachers (D&C 33:8) of gospel principles. In the same way, visions and revelations were granted to Joseph Smith (see the headings in the D&C).

Chronologically speaking, one might wonder how much time it took Lehi and Nephi to read through the gospel teachings contained in the Brass Plates. Nephi mentions that the plates of brass contained:

1. The five books of Moses (1 Nephi 5:11)
2. A record of the Jews up to the reign of Zedekiah (1 Nephi 5:12)
3. Prophecies of the holy prophets to Jeremiah (1 Nephi 5:13)
4. A genealogy of Lehi's ancestors (1 Nephi 5:14)

It is interesting to note that when prophesying about the Bible, Nephi said that it was "a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many . . . [in the Bible]" (1 Nephi 13:23).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 13:23] [See Appendix A]

1 Nephi 5:10 **He did search [the records] from the beginning (Illustration – not shown):** "Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning," by A&OR. [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1062]



1 Nephi 5:10 **Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and did search them from the beginning (Illustration):** Lehi Studying the Plates of Brass. Lehi "found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph." Artist: Clark Kelley Price [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 16]

1 Nephi 5:10 **Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning (Illustration):** Lehi Studying the Plates of Brass. Artist: Clark Kelley Price. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Ensign, January 1988, p. 28]

1 Nephi 5:11 **The Five Books of Moses:**

In 2 Kings 22:2-13 there is an account of the discovery of the Book of the Law by Hilkiah, the high priest during the renovation of the temple in the days of Josiah, the king of Judah. How could the Jews in the days of Josiah be without the Book of the Law when the brass plates which contained the "five books of Moses" (1 Nephi 5:11) were in the hands of Laban or one of his predecessors? Sidney B. Sperry asks, are we to suppose that the keepers of the brass plates deliberately withheld the Book of the Law from the Jews? They must have known the Jews were without it. Such an action would seem strange because certain individuals were allowed access to the plates in order to write the prophecies of Jeremiah. Perhaps the Book of the Law was some other book than we have supposed, but that seems quite unlikely. At present we are unable to answer, with any certainty. [Sidney B. Sperry, Answers to Book of Mormon Questions, pp. 41-42]

According to Verneil Simmons, one can only ask why the earlier find of the Book of the Law in the Temple was such a shock in the days of Josiah, when apparently the writings on the brass plates of Laban were up-to-date and available. Perhaps the situation was similar to that

evident later in the Nephite history when the records kept by the priest line seemed to be totally separate from the civil records of the king line (see Jacob 1:1-3; Omni 1:11). And it would appear that neither of the records had much influence with either the kings or priests in the old world or the new.

[Verneil W. Simmons, Peoples, Places and Prophecies, p. 71]

Note* Perhaps the recordkeepers feared that if they made things known to the king of Judah, he would confiscate the records entrusted to the tribe of Joseph since members of that tribe were now living in Judah instead of in Northern Israel. Or perhaps there was a conspiracy to keep this information from the people. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 2:13, 3:3]

1 Nephi 5:11 **He Beheld That They Did Contain . . . :**

According to Hugh Nibley, the contents of the brass plates is an amazing thing. At that time the Old Testament was not in the possession of Jews. You couldn't have it because it was a secret book. The circulation was very limited. The law was read publicly once a year, but only by the Scribes and Pharisees. That's why they were so jealous of their rights. The Scribes and Pharisees were the ones who started interpreting the law in Babylon where they didn't have a temple. They got a proprietary claim. They called themselves the rabbis, which means "the great ones." It's their own title. . . . It wasn't until the third century that Ptolemy had the seventy Jews come down. He was the king of Egypt and direct successor of Alexander the Great. He was a great and competent ruler, and he was collecting the greatest library in the world. . . . He thought he had every book on religion, but he was told, "There's one book you don't have, and that's the book of the Jews." So he ordered the seventy Jews to be brought back to Alexandria. He shut each one up in a special cubbyhole by himself and gave him a copy of the Old Testament to translate. Then he compared the translations. . . . That's why it's called the Septuagint: it was a translation by seventy Jews. By comparing them he knew that they were right. What's more, the Septuagint is far older than any Hebrew text we have. The oldest Hebrew text we have is the *Ben Asher Codex* from the ninth century. . . .

But notice what was in the brass plates. It was the *Tanach* he brought back. It wasn't just the plates of Moses. *T* is for *Torah*: that's the five books of Moses. *N* is for *Nebi im*, the prophets. And *K* is for the *Ketubim*, which are the literary works (like the Psalms) and the histories. They call the entire Old Testament the *Tanach*, and that's exactly what was in the bronze plates. . . . But remember, nobody outside of Israel ever thought about the Old Testament. Ptolemy didn't even know about it, though he was a very learned man. He didn't know about it until a Jew in his court told him about it. It was known only in Judah and only to a very select group of scribes who jealously guarded it. . . .

The brass plates also had a genealogy, and Lehi found out that he was a descendant of

Joseph. Why didn't he, who was an important rich man, have it? Well, these documents were very rare, and they were secret. He wouldn't have been able to get them. Laban was also a descendant of Joseph in a direct line. That's probably why they were in his house. But only one person at a time could receive these genealogical records; that was the direct descendant. In this case it happened to be Laban. [Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, pp. 164-165] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:18; 13:23; 19:22; 19:23; also Alma 37:3-5]

1 Nephi 5:11 **The Five Books of Moses:**

According to Walter Kaiser, Jr., a great deal of skepticism remains around the oft repeated biblical claim that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. But by the time of Joshua, this piece of revelation must have been coming to its completion, for only Joshua is said to have added any words to this legislation (Joshua 24:26). Its status as divine and holy seems to be indicated specifically enough by God's instructions to place it in the ark of the covenant. [Water C. Kaiser Jr., The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?, p. 25]

1 Nephi 5:11 **They [the Brass Plates] Did Contain the Five Books of Moses:**

Lehi took the plates of brass and searched them from the beginning. Nephi notes that Lehi, beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; and also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. And it came to pass that . . . Lehi also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; (1 Nephi 5:11-14)

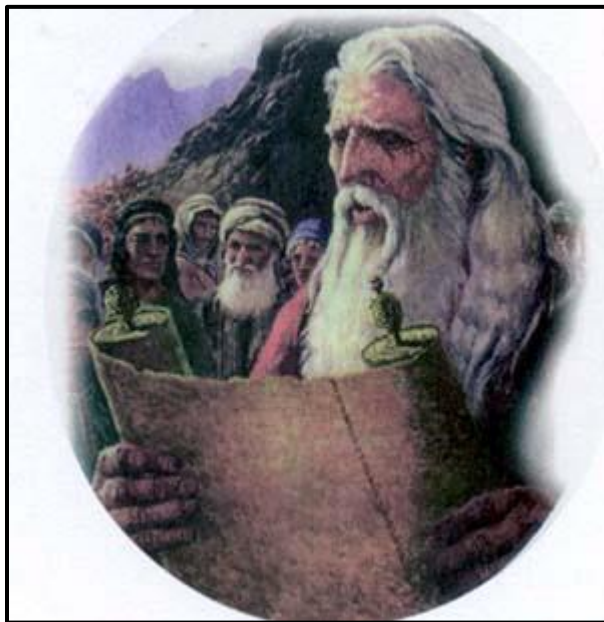
The following is a list of references to quotations from the plates of brass within the Book of Mormon:

The Plates of Brass^{lii} (1 Nephi 3:3)^{liii}

- a. Five books of Moses (1 Ne 5:11)
 1. Creation (1 Ne 17:36) (2 Ne 2:14)
 2. Fall of Adam (2 Ne 2:18) [2 Ne 2:14-26]
 3. "All the holy prophets from Moses to Abraham" (Hel 8:16,18) [Alma 46:24-26]
 4. Prophecies of Joseph (2 Ne 4:1-2) [2 Ne 3:5-21]
 5. Life of Moses (Hel 8:11,14-15,16)

- 6. Law of Moses (2 Ne 25:24-25) (Alma 25:15) (2 Ne 9:17; 15:28) (Hel 13:1; 15:5)
- b. Record of the Jews down to the reign of Zedekiah (1 Ne 5:12)
- c. Prophecies of the Holy Prophets including many by Jeremiah (1 Ne 5:13)
 - 1. Ezias (Helaman 8:20)
 - 2. Isaiah [1 Ne 20,21] [2 Ne 6,7,8,12-24] [Mos 14] (Hel 8:20) [3 Ne 22 (Savior's quote)]
 - 3. Jeremiah (Hel 8:20)
 - 4. Neum (1 Ne 19:10)
 - 5. Zenock (1 Ne 19:10) (Alma 33:15) (Hel 8:20) (3 Ne 10:16)
 - 6. Zenos (1 Ne 19:10-17) [Jacob 5] (Alma 33:13) (Hel 8:19) (3 Ne 10:16)
 - 7. Unknown Prophets^{liv} (2 Ne 32:4) (2 Ne 9:10-13) (Mos 3:10) (Alma 11:40-45) (Hel 5:8,12,25; 10:7; 12:25-26)
- d. Genealogy of Lehi's fathers (1 Ne 5:14-16)

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See Appendix B of Volume 6]



1 Nephi 5:11 **We beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses (Illustration):** Moses [Clark Kelley Price, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1]



1 Nephi 5:11 **Adam and Eve (Illustration):** Adam and Eve. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [Gospel Art](#), #101]

1 Nephi 5:12 **A Record of the Jews from the Beginning:**

[See the commentary on Ether 1:3]

1 Nephi 5:12 **A Record of the Jews from the Beginning, Even down to the Commencement of the Reign of Zedekiah:**

After Nephi brought back the brass plates, Lehi searched through them and found that they contained "a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah" (1 Nephi 5:12). This phrase might imply that not much time had passed between the "commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah" (1

Nephi 1:4) and the time when Nephi retrieved the brass plates; otherwise, more writings would be on the plates. On the other hand, the phrase might imply that a wicked Laban just did not record anything after the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 5:11-13 **The Plates of Brass (Knowledge of the Old Testament in Mesoamerica):**

In Volume IV of his *Antiquities of Mexico*, Lord Kingsborough found so many evidences of Biblical stories among the Indians that he concluded: "It is unnecessary to attempt in this place to trace out any further scriptural analogies in the traditions and mythology of the New World, since the coincidences which have already been mentioned are sufficiently strong to warrant the conclusion that the Indians, at a period long antecedent to the arrival of the Spaniards in America, were acquainted with a portion at least of the Old Testament."

[Quoted in Daniel Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 409]

1 Nephi 5:13 **The Prophecies of the Holy Prophets, from the Beginning [down to Jeremiah]:**

According to Walter Kaiser, Jr., by the sixth century B.C., in the book of the prophet Daniel, there were clear references already to "the books" of the prophets (Daniel 9:2).^{lv} In fact, what Daniel had reference to was the prophecy of Jeremiah about Judah remaining in captivity for seventy years. Since Daniel was writing during Judah's captivity, that means he was writing scarcely more than seventy years since Jeremiah wrote his prophecy, and already regarded it as "Scriptures." A similar situation can be observed in the way Jeremiah treated a prophecy of the prophet Micah, who preceded him by some 125 years. Jeremiah warned: "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah . . . "This is what the Lord Almighty says: Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets" (Jeremiah 26:18). Here is a strong argument for the *progressive recognition* of the Scriptures as they emerged from the hands of their writers rather than the more popular assertion that it was a church council or the like that declared what properly constituted Scripture and what did not.

One of the criteria found within the text of Scripture is that there was a passing of the mantle, as it were, from one writer to another.^{lvi} Indeed, a veritable chain of verses in Chronicles could well set the scene for this thesis. For example, 1 Chronicles 29:29 declared that the history of David was written in the books of the prophets Samuel, Nathan and Gad. This is followed by a notice in 2 Chronicles 9:29 that the history of Solomon was written by the prophets Nathan, Ahijah and Iddo. Similarly, the work of Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 12:15) was composed by the prophets Shemaiah and Iddo. Then Abijah's history was composed by the prophet Iddo (2 Chronicles 13:22); Jehoshaphat's by the prophet Jehu (2 Chronicles 20:34); Hezekiah's by Isaiah the prophet (2 Chronicles 32:32); and Manasseh's by "seers" (another name

for prophets) who went unnamed (2 Chronicles 33:18-19). This chain of prophets existed from before the days of David up to the end of the Judean kingdom. Accordingly, the case for a succession of prophets is a real phenomenon of the biblical text. In effect, the prophets passed the baton from one to the other, thereby setting up a stream of thought and an indication of where to look for that which was to be regarded as canonical.

[Water C. Kaiser Jr., The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?, pp. 26, 32-33]

1 Nephi 5:13 **The Prophecies of the Holy Prophets:**

According to McConkie and Millet, the "prophecies of the holy prophets" (1 Nephi 5:13) which were on the brass plates would have been similar to those contained in our Old Testament, but much more extensive and complete. The brass plates contained, for example, the prophecies of Abraham concerning the coming of Jesus Christ (Helaman 8:16-17), the prophecies of Jacob concerning the Nephite branch of his descendants (Alma 46:23-26), and prophecies of Joseph concerning Moses and Joseph Smith (2 Nephi 3). In addition we become aware, through references in the Book of Mormon relating to the brass plates, of such noble but little-known prophetic figures as Zenos, Zenock, and Neum. (1 Nephi 19:10-17; Jacob 5; Alma 33:3-17; 34:7; 3 Nephi 10:16.)

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 49]

1 Nephi 5:13 **By the Mouth of Jeremiah:**

John A. Tvedtnes informs us that Hebrew often uses compound prepositions, made up of a preposition plus a noun, in places where English would normally use just a preposition. For example, Hebrew uses compound prepositions that would be translated literally as "by the hand of" and "by the mouth of [Jeremiah]" (1 Nephi 5:13). English would normally use just "by [Jeremiah]."

[John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon" in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., p. 81]

1 Nephi 5:13 **Many Prophecies Which Have Been Spoken by the Mouth of Jeremiah:**

Question: How did the prophet Jeremiah's words get in records kept by a wicked Laban?
[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 5:13 **Many Prophecies Which Have Been Spoken by the Mouth of Jeremiah:**

According to David and JoAnn Seely, the Book of Mormon records that the brass plates contained "the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also *many* prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah" (1 Nephi 5:13).^{lvii} Although we do not know the process by which the keeper of the brass plates acquired and wrote the prophecies on the plates, the book of Jeremiah is the only book in the entire Bible that tells us how it originated.

In 605 B.C. the Lord commanded Jeremiah to recite to his scribe Baruch all of the word of the Lord from the time of Josiah down to that moment (see Jeremiah 36:1-4). Jeremiah then commanded Baruch to take this scroll and read it to the people in the precincts of the temple (see Jeremiah 36:8). This Baruch did, but, when King Jehoiakim heard about it, he ordered Baruch to deliver the scroll to the king. Jehoiakim had a servant read the scroll to him and as he heard the words of the Lord read to him he took his knife and cut the scroll in pieces and burned it (see Jeremiah 36:20-26). The Lord then commanded Jeremiah to take a fresh scroll and give it to Baruch and to dictate again the prophecies. Baruch wrote down all of the prophecies that had been lost, together with many similar words (see Jeremiah 36:32).

From this account we learn many significant things about the book of Jeremiah, and several possibilities emerge as to how Jeremiah's writings were preserved on the brass plates. First, it seems clear that Jeremiah maintained the prophecies in his memory for a long time. Jehoiakim's destruction of the scroll of Jeremiah may have provided the impetus for the keeper of the record on the brass plates to acquire a copy of the prophecies of Jeremiah. The keeper of the brass plates could have had Jeremiah dictate the prophecies directly to him to be recorded on the plates; possibly Baruch loaned him the scroll; or perhaps the keeper of the brass plates copied the record from the second scroll as a backup in case the scroll was again destroyed. It is interesting that the Book of Mormon does not specify that the prophecies of Jeremiah up to the time of Zedekiah were preserved. Perhaps this is an indication that the sayings of Jeremiah were copied onto the brass plates in conjunction with the attempt to destroy the prophecies of Jeremiah during the reign of King Jehoiakim (see Jeremiah 36). [David Rolph and JoAnn H. Seely, "Lehi & Jeremiah: Prophets, Priests & Patriarchs," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, FARMS, Vol 8, Num 2, 1999, pp. 29-30]

Note* The book of Jeremiah records that it was Baruch, son of Neriah, who transcribed the prophet Jeremiah's words (Jeremiah 32:12; 36; 43:1-7; and 45). According to Walter Kaiser, through a most amazing combination of circumstances, it would appear that we now have two extraordinary reminders of reliability of the witness to Baruch's presence in the time of Jeremiah (thus giving added credence to Jeremiah's words).

A *bullā* is a lump of clay impressed with a scribe's seal. *Bullae* were used to seal documents written on papyrus or parchment. After the document was rolled and secured with

a string, a glob of clay was applied to the knot and then a seal was affixed to show ownership or the name of the sender. One particular *bulla* that has been found bears the same name as the scribe in the book of Jeremiah. In three lines of ancient Hebrew text, written in the formal cursive style of the seventh century B.C., the seal reads, "belonging to Berekhyahu, the scribe."^{viii} Berekhyahu is almost certainly the complete name of the shortened form Baruch, which means "Blessed of Yahweh." Baruch's father, likewise, in its full form is also Neriyaahu, called Neriah in the Bible. The suffix *-yahu* is a shortened form of Yahweh and appears on many Israelite names in this period of history. The *bulla* has been designated "the seal of Baruch."

Now a second *bulla* has shown up in a privately printed book entitled *Forty New Ancient West Semitic Inscriptions*. Even though no authors are listed in the book, it is said that one is Robert Deutsch, a self-described archaeologist, and the other is Michael Heltzer, a professor of the Hebrew Bible at the University of Haifa. The same seal that impressed the *bulla* just described as belonging to Baruch was used on this one, for the three registers of writing are identical. The whole seal is also surrounded by a double framing line. On the back of this *bulla* are impressions of the papyrus fibers from the document to which it once was tied. What is remarkable about this second *bulla* is that its edge is embossed with a fingerprint, which is presumably that of Baruch the scribe himself. Baruch must have written and sealed the document to which it was attached. Thus we not only have evidence of the accuracy of the claim that Baruch was a scribe; we may even have the very fingerprint of Jeremiah's scribe.^{lix} [Water C. Kaiser Jr., The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?, pp. 158-159]

1 Nephi 5:13 **Many Prophecies Which Have Been Spoken by the Mouth of Jeremiah:**

Nephi declares that the plates of brass contained "many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah" (1 Nephi 5:13) and that they were "a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah" (1 Nephi 5:12). One might wonder, How did the prophet Jeremiah's words get in records kept by a wicked Laban who sided with the king? Jeremiah' words had been considered subversive to the state and the scroll upon which they were written was cut up into little pieces by king Jehoiakim. Why would Laban even consider engraving those words on metal plates?

According to Potter and Wellington, Zoram might have been the one responsible. Zoram appears to have been in charge of the plates so presumably he could determine what was placed on, or removed from, them. When Nephi eventually revealed his true identity to Zoram something interesting happened. Zoram was afraid for his life and had to be restrained by Nephi. Nephi first promised that he would spare Zoram's life if he would listen to what Nephi had to say (1 Nephi 4:32). He then made an oath that Zoram would be a free man if he accompanied them into the wilderness (1 Nephi 4:33). Zoram remained apparently unconvinced at this stage because Nephi had to speak to him still further. Nephi next told Zoram that it was the Lord who had commanded him to "do this thing" (1 Nephi 4:34). Only at

this stage does Nephi tell us that Zoram was satisfied.

Zoram obviously held a high position in his master's household and presumably had some power and authority therein. He had a great deal to lose by joining with Nephi and yet as soon as he heard that the Lord had commanded them to do this thing he immediately joined them and even made an oath to remain with them from that time forth. Zoram left all his possessions behind, perhaps even family, to be with the Lord's anointed. This sounds very much as though Zoram, although associated with those in authority, in fact sided with the prophets and saw this was an opportune time to depart. This assumption is further born out when we look at Zoram's actions following this time. We never read of Zoram murmuring against Lehi or Nephi. Nephi is the only other one who is not reported to murmur on the entire journey. When the family reached the promised land, Nephi eventually left with the righteous members of the family. Zoram and his family went with him (2 Nephi 5:6).

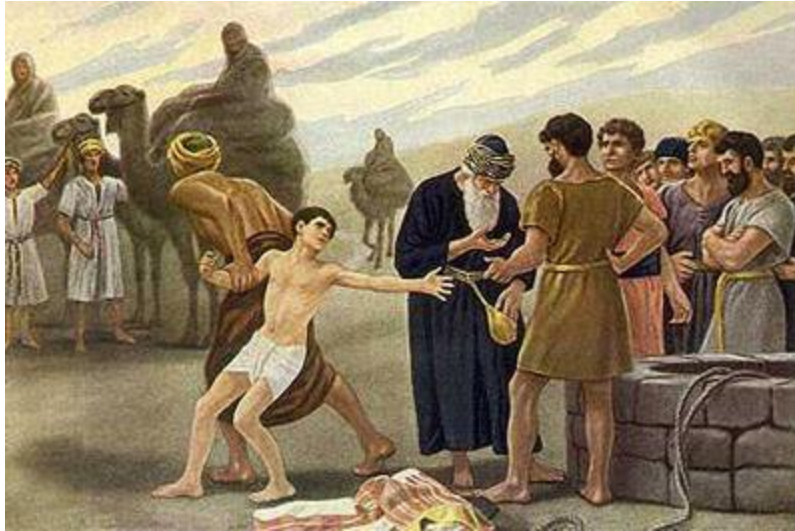
Could one possibly conclude that Zoram had placed the records of the prophet Jeremiah on the brass plates, unbeknownst to Laban? That instead of following his master he had followed the Lord, that his interest in the plots of the elders of the Jews was as much in the interest of self-preservation as current affairs? He must have known that his position was precarious. If Laban ever read the plates he would immediately become aware of Zoram's politics. Who can know how Zoram felt when he thought that Laban (Nephi in disguise) wanted to see the plates? How must his heart have pounded as his mind raced to think of excuses? At first he was confused when he found that Laban was in fact Nephi, but quickly regained his composure and came to the conclusion that now was the time to make the transition from siding with Laban to siding with the Lord's servants.

The obtaining of the brass plates is the central portion of the chiasm of the first nine chapters. Nephi is bringing this part to our attention in order to prove his purpose to show us "that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Nephi 1:20). Nephi tells us that he is abridging the record of his father (1 Nephi 1:17) and yet this part of the story is composed entirely of intimate details of what went on in Jerusalem that would only have been available to Nephi. This part is obviously an insertion by Nephi to create that chiasm and to place it at the center of the narrative. As such, it is interesting to note what Nephi is teaching us here. Not only is Nephi successful, an obvious conclusion to anyone reading the story, but also the Lord's tender mercies are extended to Zoram, who has been faithful, even unto the power of his deliverance from the predicament he finds himself in.

[George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript (July 2000), pp. 265-266] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 4:20; 4:35]

1 Nephi 5:14 **Plates of Brass:**

Some might consider the recording of scriptures on "plates of brass" (1 Nephi 5:14) an anomaly. But according to Diane Wirth, Isaiah was commanded to engrave prophecy on brass. The Hebrew text of Isaiah 8:1 reads "take thee a great *Gillayon* and write in it . . . the word." "Gillayhon" was observed by Dr. Adam Clarke, a celebrated Biblical scholar, to mean a polished tablet of metal upon which the prophecy was to be engraved. [Diane E. Wirth, [A Challenge to the Critics](#), p. 42]



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1 Nephi 5:14 **Joseph . . . who was sold into Egypt (Illustration – not shown):** Joseph Is Sold by His Brothers. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [Gospel Art](#), #109]



1 Nephi 5:14 **Plates of brass (Illustration):** A chart compiled by Franklin S. Harris, Jr. lists 63 instances where ancient Old World writing has been found on metal plates. The following is documented: Object and Material; Civilization, Place; Language and Script; Time; and Remarks. The accompanying map above, illustrated by Charles J. Jacobsen, shows the discovery locations for the 63 records. [[Book of Mormon Charts](#), pp. 12-13, compiled from *The Instructor Magazine* by M. Ross Richards and Marie Curtis Richards]

1 Nephi 5:14 **Wherefore He Knew That He Was a Descendant of Joseph:**

After Nephi retrieved the plates of Laban, he notes that his father Lehi took them and searched them from the beginning. Among other things, Lehi "also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph: yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt" (1 Nephi 5:14). Critics of the Book of Mormon have wondered how a devout Jew could fail to know what tribe he was from until he saw the plates.

Charles Pyle replies with the following question, "How many devout Jews today know, by heart, their genealogy, or what tribe that they are from? Sometimes, historical circumstances make it such that a genealogy may be forgotten, or the details of their tribal lineage may not be remembered correctly. Such was the case with certain individuals who were of the priestly line, who required a tracing of the genealogies, only to find that they had been omitted from the genealogy of the priesthood (Nehemiah 7:63-64). Nephi's comments could

easily lend themselves to the interpretation that Lehi, upon actually *seeing* his lineage, then knew, beyond oral tradition, of his line of descent. Before Nephi even was sent to retrieve the plates, Lehi proclaimed that "Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of thy forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass" (1 Nephi 3:3; see also 3:12). [D. Charles Pyle, "Review of 'The Book of Mormon Vs. the Bible (or Common Sense)'" <http://www.linkline.com/personal/dcpyle/reading/bodineco.htm>, p. 4]

Note* Perhaps Lehi found that he was a *direct* descendant of Joseph. In other words, that Nephi was entitled to be the caretaker of the plates because of his blood lineage. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 5:16 **My Father, Lehi, Did Discover the Genealogy of His Fathers:**

It is recorded in Ezra 2:62-63 and Nehemiah 7:64-65 that upon return from the Babylonian captivity, some could not identify their lineage. It is possible that some of those genealogies had been kept on the plates of brass which had been removed to the New World by Lehi. [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 13]

1 Nephi 5:16 **Laban Was Also a Descendant of Joseph, *Wherefore He and His Fathers Had Kept the Records:***

Daniel Rolph notes that in Nephi's record, the prophet and his successors fail to mention or reveal the provenance or pre-Laban origin of the sword of Laban. Moreover, up until now, most scholarly attention regarding the sword of Laban has been focused on its "steel" blade. According to Rolph, the true significance of what was to become a Nephite heirloom may have been hitherto completely overlooked. In this respect it is noteworthy that Nephi records that "Laban also was also a descendant of Joseph, *wherefore he and his fathers had kept the records*" (1 Nephi 5:16, emphasis added). Could the sword of Laban also have been "kept" and handed down as part of these records? Could ancestry play an important role in relation to the sword of Laban *prior* to Laban's ownership?

By Joseph Smith's day the sword of Laban was at least twenty-five hundred years of age, and evidently in excellent condition. Joseph Smith, Jr., was the first individual permitted to view the ancient sword and its accoutrements long after their interment at Cumorah by Moroni; though he was a Latter-day prophet of God, Joseph Smith was also directly descended from the biblical patriarch, Joseph of Egypt.^{ix} [Note* Some of these sacred objects of veneration had not only been transmitted through the lineage of the Nephite prophets, who also stemmed from Joseph, but had been passed down from earlier times (D&C 17:1) through a special lineage (see Ether 1:6-34, 3:23-28; 4:4-5).]

The birthright, or rights of inheritance connected with the firstborn, generally included

land acquisition, along with the authority to preside (see, for example, Abraham 2:9-11; Genesis 48 and 49; Deuteronomy 33:13-17; D&C 86:8-10). Since Jacob and Leah's eldest son Reuben had "defiled his father's bed" (1 Chronicles 5:1), thus losing his right to succession, his birthright and inheritance were given "unto the sons of Joseph" (1 Chronicles 5:1). Though out of Judah would come the Christ or the "chief ruler," the "birthright was Joseph's" (1 Chronicles 5:2). As a result of this event, a birthright sword and other sacred regalia of the patriarchs would naturally come into the possession of Joseph and his descendants, which included both Laban and Nephi.

Had the sword of Laban, like the brass plates, come down from the fathers, as a regal treasure of Joseph? Was it accidental, or an act of Providence, that Nephi brought the sword as well as the plates out of Jerusalem to the land of promise? According to Rolph, evidence suggests that the weapon may have been the birthright sword of biblical tradition, a sacred heirloom that may have been wielded by the patriarchs up until the time of Joseph of Egypt. Laban, being a descendant of Joseph, inherited the birthright sword and the plates of brass, both treasures eventually coming into the possession of Nephi, who was both a prophet and a descendant of Joseph, as was Joseph Smith, Jr.

[Daniel N. Rolph, "Prophets, Kings, and Swords: The Sword of Laban and Its Possible Pre-Laban Origin," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Spring 1993, pp. 73, 75-76] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 4:9]

1 Nephi 5:16 Laban Also Was a Descendant of Joseph, *Wherefore* He and His Fathers Had Kept the Records [the Brass Plates]:

According to Robert Millet, there is no specific reference in the Book of Mormon to the origin of the brass plates. After retrieving and reading the plates, Nephi explained that "Laban also was a descendant of Joseph, wherefore he and his fathers had kept the records (the brass plates)" (1 Nephi 5:16). Exactly how long before the time of Laban the brass records were begun is unknown. The record was probably kept in the tribe of Ephraim, and thus Laban may well have been of that tribe (see Genesis 48:5, 13-20; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2). In suggesting how it was that the families of Ephraim and Manasseh (from whom Lehi and Ishmael were descendants) came to settle in Jerusalem, Sidney B. Sperry has written:

The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians when its capital of Samaria capitulated to Sargon II in 722 B.C. The forebearers of Laban may have fled to Jerusalem to prevent the sacred records from falling into alien hands. Lehi's grandfather or great-grandfather may have left his northern home for Jerusalem in order to prevent his children from intermarrying and making religious compromises with the foreigners brought into the land by the Assyrians (Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, pp. 43-44)

Brother Sperry then asked the following question in regards to this matter: "What

happened to the keeping of sacred records when the Israelites became sharply divided on political grounds--so much so that the two nations were enemies?" He then suggested an answer:

The prophets in both nations probably paid little attention to the political lines of division, but it is improbable that all of them had their words recorded in the scriptures of both nations. From the time of the division until the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C., the brass plates may well have been the official scripture of the ten tribes. It is probable that some prophets wrote on these plates whose writings may not have been recorded on the records kept in Judah [meaning in the Southern Kingdom]. Were Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias (1 Nephi 19:10; Helaman 8:20) among them? They were all Hebrew prophets known to the Nephites, but their names do not appear in our current Old Testament. It is also possible that the writings of some prophets in Judah were not placed on the brass plates during the period under consideration, but of this we have no way of knowing. (Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, pp. 43-44)

The fact that Lehi's genealogy could be traced back to Joseph--specifically Manasseh (Alma 10:3)--also implies that the record had its origins in the Northern Kingdom rather than in Judah in the south (1 Nephi 3:3, 12; 5:14-16). In one of those prophecies of Zenos are found these words: "And *as for those who are at Jerusalem . . .*" (1 Nephi 19:13; emphasis added), suggesting that Zenos was speaking from somewhere other than Jerusalem. Further, not Mormon's words concerning the prophets Zenos and Zenock:

Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things [signs of the death of Christ] at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things. Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because *they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed* (3 Nephi 10:15-16; emphasis added).

This passage certainly suggests that Zenos and Zenock were both of the tribe of Joseph (Robert L. Millet, "The Brass Plates: An Inspired and Expanded Version of the Old Testament."

The Old Testament and the Latter-day Saints, pp. 421-423)

Robert Millet, "The Influence of the Brass Plates," in Nyman and Tate eds. *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, pp. 208-209]

In a review of Robert Millet's video entitled, "The Prophets of the Brass Plates" and his Book of Mormon Symposium paper ("The Influence of the Brass Plates"), Richard Grant writes that King Benjamin's identification of the language of this record as Egyptian (Mosiah 1:4) introduces a further line of speculation. Could this record have originated as the family record of Joseph the son of Jacob? His wife was Egyptian. His sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were Egyptian. That may have been the only language they knew. Of course, Joseph would have had

a copy of the then extant scriptural record in Egyptian. Might not his family have continued to maintain that Egyptian (Maybe reformed Egyptian) language record?

[Richard G. Grant, "The Brass Plates and Their Prophets," <http://www.cometozarahemla.org/brassplates/brass-plates.html>] [See also Robert Millet, "The Prophets of the Brass Plates," FARMS video; and Robert Millet, "The Influence of the Brass Plates," in Nyman and Tate eds. *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*]

Note* Scholars now believe that a significant number of Israelites fled the Northern Kingdom, seeking refuge in Judah. Their evidence is consistent with Dr. Sperry's speculation—they brought Scriptures with them and those Scriptures were different from the Scripture of Judah.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 1:7] [For further information on the brass plates, see the commentaries on 1 Nephi 5:11 13:23, 19:22; 2 Nephi 2:17, 3:18-19; Mosiah 1:3-4; Alma 37:4-5; 3 Nephi 10:16;]

1 Nephi 5:16 Laban Also Was a Descendant of Joseph, Wherefore He and His Fathers Had Kept the Records:

According to Noel Reynolds, two decades before Lehi received the visions and revelations that sent him and his family into the wilderness, a manuscript now generally believed to have included all or part of the book of Deuteronomy was discovered in the temple at Jerusalem. This occurred during the 18th year of the reign of the righteous king Josiah (approximately 621 B.C.). After the discovery, Josiah went up to the temple with "all the people from the least to the greatest" and read the book to them, renewing the covenant contained therein in the presence of the Lord," and all the people pledged themselves to the covenant" (see 2 Kings 22-23, especially 23:1-3; see 2 Chronicles 34-35). The book and this event then provided the basis for Josiah's reforms by which he overthrew idol worship and centralized worship of Jehovah at the Jerusalem temple. Some of Lehi's own understanding of the covenant with Israel might have derived from that memorable event. The discovery of that version of Deuteronomy was without doubt the manuscript find of the century. It occurred while Lehi, an exceptionally literate and learned man in the prime of his life, lived in or near Jerusalem. Reynolds writes:

While I do not want to develop an account of the origin of the brass plates in this paper, I would note that it is even possible that the late-seventh-century discovery of this new text provided someone with the motivation to create the brass plates as an enlarged and corrected version of the Josephite scriptural record."

He makes this footnote:

John W. Welch suggests that the plates of brass might have been produced for King Josiah himself, after the discovery of Deuteronomy (see his study "Authorship of the Book of Isaiah," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W.

Welch [Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998], 430-32.

[Noel B. Reynolds, "Lehi As Moses," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 9, Num. 2, 2000, FARMS, pp. 27-28, 81]

1 Nephi 5:17 When My Father Saw All These Things, He Was Filled with the Spirit, and Began to Prophecy concerning His Seed:

According to Brant Gardner, the effect of reading the scriptures of the brass plates had a profound effect on Lehi, sufficient to induce prophetic vision: "And now when my father saw all these things [on the plates of brass], he was filled with the Spirit, and began to prophecy concerning his seed" (1 Nephi 5:17). While the scriptures may have a similar effect on all of us--to inspire us to greater receptivity to the things of the spirit--the brass plates had a particular strength for Lehi due to their relationship to his ancestry [and to his posterity]. . . . Note also that it was not only Lehi who searched the brass plates. Nephi himself is involved in understanding the import of the records which he gave so much to obtain (v. 21 "*we had obtained the records . . . and searched them . . .*")

We have the information about the brass plates because we have the Book of Mormon. Is it possible that we have the Book of Mormon *because* Lehi and Nephi had the brass plates? In other words, did the brass plates provide many of the models used in the development and transmission of the Book of Mormon texts up to the time of Mormon's compilation?

(1) The first obvious similarity is the preservation of the sacred text on metal. . . . From a physical standpoint, the brass plates provided a model for the Nephite plates.

(2) The language of the Nephite plates may also have been influenced by that of the brass plates. There is reference to the necessity of having an understanding of Egyptian to be able to read the brass plates (Mosiah 1:4). If they were written using any form of Egyptian, the decision to use *Egyptian*, or later *reformed Egyptian* on the Nephite plates would be clearly taking a model from the brass plates.

(3) The brass plates contained a collection of the words of individual prophets. This was also the case in the Nephite plates; the tradition was kept that each person writing on the plates would contribute their "book." (The reader should note that this tradition was departed from in the book of Omni.) The construction of a canon which consisted of the collected works of individuals follows the brass plates.

(4) The brass plates were kept by the lineage of Joseph. . . . That model, of having a set of scriptures related to a particular lineage can be seen with the Nephite records.

As a matter of note, the dual transmission line of the large and small plates may also

have some connection to the model of the brass plates. Clearly the brass plates followed a lineal transmission, and were known to the members of that lineage. Just as clearly, however, there were other sets of scripture available (if only that of the line of Judah). We therefore have a model of multiple sets of scripture which could serve for the large/small plates distinction. Since the large plates became the politically transmitted set, there may have been precedence in Jerusalem for an "official" record which followed the political power, with the brass plates representing the smaller lineage tradition. That conceptual model fits directly with the known transmission lines of the large and small plates in the Book of Mormon.

[Brant Gardner, "Book of Mormon Commentary," 1Nephi/1Nephi5.htm, pp. 8-9]

1 Nephi 5:18 These Plates of Brass Should Go Forth unto All Nation, Kindreds, Tongues, and People:

According to Hugh Nibley, this prophecy has reference to the Old Testament going forth to the world. When Lehi said, "that these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations kindreds, tongues, and people" (1 Nephi 5:18), it was very shocking news, but it was fulfilled. The copies were made in Alexandria. That's where we got our Septuagint. It spread throughout the whole world from there, and all the world has the Bible now. Nobody ever dreamed that this local, national record would become the world record. Verse 19: "Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time. And he prophesied many things concerning his seed." Notice, this doesn't refer to the Book of Mormon; this refers to the brass plates. They are still bright. They have come down to us, and we still have them to this day. He said the records were "of great worth unto us." Why did they need them on the trip? Verse 21: ". . . that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children" (the commandments in the prophets, in the writings, and in the book of Moses).

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, pp. 165-166] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 5:11, also Alma 37:3-5]

1 Nephi 5:19 Neither Should They Be Dimmed Any More by Time:

McConkie and Millet explain that among Lehi's joyous prophecies was the full assurance that "these plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time" (1 Nephi 5:19). From a very temporal perspective, perhaps Lehi was indicating here a neglect by Laban of these brass treasures, a neglect which would have allowed the plates to become tarnished or corroded. [Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 50]

1 Nephi 5:19 Neither Should They Be Dimmed Any More By Time:

According to Brant Gardner, Lehi's prophecy that the plates would not "be dimmed any more by time" (1 Nephi 5:19) has two possible references. One is that the words of the plates would be preserved and be present in the minds of his descendants. The second is a near magical contention that the effects of time would not diminish their sheen. To be read in this latter sense, we would have to accept some tarnishing of the plates already ("neither should they be dimmed *any more* by time"). Perhaps they had required cleaning from during the years of storage, and from then on were miraculously kept free of age. As Brant Gardner knows of no further reference to their miraculous state of preservation, he prefers the former reading. [Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, "<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStoics/1Nephi/1Nephi5.htm>, pp. 12-13]

Note* Accepting the first supposition also requires that through the years, the message contained on the brass plates had been "dimmed," either from neglectful non-use, or from intentional misrepresentation or intentional silence. It is worth noting that for whatever the cause, this "dimming" of the message on the brass plates was significant enough to cost Laban, their caretaker, his life. One wonders if the "dimmed" message was Christ. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 6:4 For the Fulness of Mine Intent Is That I May Persuade Men to Come unto the God of Abraham:

According to Walter Kaiser, no person is more central to the message of the Torah than the decisive role played by the patriarch Abraham in the book of Genesis. Even from a casual reading of this first of the five books of the Torah, it is clear that Abraham is a central figure. Abraham's narrative stretches from Genesis 11-25, framed on either side by two genealogies (Genesis 11:10-26; 25:12-18).

To show how important this man and his story is to the theme of Genesis, let alone to the whole of the canon of Scripture, note the distinctive pattern that oscillates back and forth between the divine promise of a "seed," or heir, and the persistent complications that threaten to frustrate that promise from being realized.^{ixi}

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Problem | Sarah is barren (Gen 11:30) |
| 2. Promise | God promises a seed (12:2) |
| 3. Complication | Sarah is abducted (12:10-13:1) |
| 4. Promise | God promises an heir (15:1-21) |
| 5. Complication | Ishmael is born (16:1-16) |
| 6. Promise | God promises Isaac (17:1-18:15) |
| 7. Complication | Sarah is abducted (20:1-18) |

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------|
| 8. Fulfillment | Isaac is confirmed as heir (21:1-21) |
| 9. Complication | Abraham must sacrifice Isaac (22:1-10) |
| 10. Resolution | God intervenes (22:11-19) |

The message of the story falls apart without the wholeness of the solution that comes for each emergency faced. Now this is the same promise that is at the heart of the message of the entire Bible. [Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?, pp. 132-133]

Note* God's covenant deliverance (and destruction) of his people is also the heart of the message of the Book of Mormon. The reader should note especially that the first book of Nephi is a testament to Nephi and Lehi's covenant deliverance not only from the captivity and bondage associated with the fall of Jerusalem, but their deliverance from Laban, desert travel, starvation, Laman & Lemuel, sea travel, etc. Mormon would use this covenant theme to "finish [his] record upon" (Words of Mormon 1:5).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 15:18; 22:9; 2 Nephi 29:14; Jacob 4:5; Helaman 8:17; 8:18; 3 Nephi 20:25; 20:27]

1 Nephi 6:4 **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:**

Walter Kaiser notes that Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) declared around the turn of the century that "no historical knowledge" of the patriarchs could be obtained from Genesis, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were a mere "glorified mirage" projected backward into Hebrew history.^{lxii} However, from the 1940's to the 1960's a successful rebuttal was made to Wellhausen's challenge to the historical veracity of the patriarchs. Two scholars set the stories of the three ancient patriarchs into the background of the ancient Near East: William Foxwell Albright (1891-1971) and Cyrus Herzl Gordon (1908-2001).^{lxiii} After skepticism continued, these two scholars, along with Ephraim A. Speiser mounted an impressive number of parallels between the patriarchal stories and second millennium laws and social customs. Given this evidence, Roland de Vaux declared "that these traditions have a firm historical basis," while John Bright concluded, "We can assert with full confidence that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were actual historical individuals."^{lxiv} [Walter C. Kaiser Jr., The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?, pp. 84-85]

1 Nephi 6:6 **They Shall Not Occupy These Plates with Things Which Are Not of Worth unto the Children of Men:**

Note* Nephi states that he would "give commandment unto my seed, that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men" (1 Nephi 6:6). In view of this statement, students of the Book of Mormon should be very wary of discounting the geographical or cultural phrases as having just "incidental" worth in connecting

the doctrinal passages. If they have "worth" then we should seek to discover that worth.
[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 7:1 [Lehi's] Sons Should Take Daughters to Wife:

Fulfilling the Lord's command to "take daughters to wife" (1 Nephi 7:1) is explained in the Book of Mormon in a way culturally foreign to us. First of all, what man in his right mind would presume to speak for any of his daughters, let alone all of them? And second, how could a man ever hope to convince all of his family (even the married sons) to accompany him into the wilderness? A statement by apostle Erastus Snow helps shed some light on this problem:

"Whoever has read the Book of Mormon carefully will have learned that the remnants of the house of Joseph dwelt upon the American continent; and that Lehi learned by searching the records of his fathers that were written upon the plates of brass, that he was of the lineage of Manasseh. The Prophet Joseph informed us that the record of Lehi was contained on the 116 pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen, and of which an abridgment is given us in the first Book of Nephi, which is the record of Nephi individually, he himself being of the lineage of Manasseh; but that Ishmael was of the lineage of Ephraim, and that *his sons married into Lehi's family*, and Lehi's sons married Ishmael's daughters, thus fulfilling the words of Jacob upon Ephraim and Manasseh in the 48th chapter of Genesis, which says, 'And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the land.' thus these descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim grew together upon this American continent . . ." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 23, pp. 184-185).

Cleon Skousen claims that Ishmael's two sons had *already* married (1 Nephi 7:6) and had families of their own prior to the time they joined this expedition. If these two sons had married daughters of Lehi as explained by Erastus Snow, then the relationship between these two families had been established as "in-laws" long before this time. Lehi and Ishmael were therefore not only entirely familiar with each other, but were probably the closest of friends. [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1067]



1 Nephi 7:1 [Lehi's] sons should take [Ishmael's] daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise (Illustration): Untitled. The daughters of Ishmael. Artist: Ted Henninger. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 44]

1 Nephi 7:1 The Lord Spake . . . That [Lehi's] Sons Should Take Daughters to Wife, That They Might Raise up Seed unto the Lord in the Land of Promise:

In 1 Nephi 7:1 we find that the Lord spake unto Lehi, "saying that it was not meet for him, Lehi, that he should take his family into the wilderness alone; but that his sons should take daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise." According to Donna Nielsen, a knowledge of the biblical marriage imagery can greatly enrich our understanding of how God relates to us through covenants. Jewish tradition and law dictated that marriage was not an option. Anciently the Jews believed that a man would not receive the highest blessings that life offered without a woman by his side. Accordingly, the word for "salvation" in Hebrew (*jeshu-ah*) is a feminine term.^{lxv} The Jews believed that marriage was an important element of salvation. Celibacy was not considered to be a virtue. There is not a word in biblical Hebrew for "bachelor." Even the modern Hebrew word for bachelor, *ravak*, comes from a root word meaning "empty."

[Donna B. Nielsen, Beloved Bridegroom: Finding Christ in Ancient Jewish Marriage and Family Customs, pp. 2-3]

1 Nephi 7:1 That They Might Raise Up Seed unto the Lord in the Land of Promise:

The Lord commanded Lehi that "his sons should take daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise" (1 Nephi 7:1). According to Reynolds and

Sjodahl, the first divine commandment to men created in God's image, was: "Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). In order to enable Adam to keep this divine law, God formed a woman of a "rib" taken from the side of Adam, wherefore he, on seeing this new, glorious creation, said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." The Creator added to this: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:22-24; 19:4-5) The commandment to replenish the earth has not been canceled; it will be in force until the entire earth is filled with the children of God. . . .

The word which in the story of the creation of man is translated "rib," (Hebrew *zelah*) occurs 38 times in the Old Testament. Nowhere, except in that account, is it rendered "rib." In a number of passages it is translated "side." (Exodus 25:12,14; 26:20; 27:7; 36:25,31; 37:35; 38:7) In 2 Samuel 16:13 it is rendered, "hillside." And in Ezekiel 41 it occurs ten times and is rendered, "side chambers." Why the translators of Genesis should have preferred "rib" to "side" is a mystery. "Chamber" would, in my [Reynolds' and Sjodahl's] opinion or judgment be preferable. The side chambers of the temple were used for sacred purposes. In some of them the sacred utensils and the vast treasures of the sanctuary were, no doubt, stored. But the body of Adam was a temple of God, with its side chambers, as well as main chambers, in which the main springs of life were stored. From these chambers it pleased God to draw his material for the second sacred structure, to be joined to the first. And so Adam, who was perfectly conscious of what the Lord had done during his sleep, exclaimed, as soon as he saw the new creation, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."

[George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, pp. 55,59]

1 Nephi 7:1 The Lord Spake . . . That [Lehi's] Sons Should Take Daughters to Wife, That They Might Raise up Seed unto the Lord:

According to John Welch, Lehi was a real person, who lived in a real world. It is a testimony to him to see how aptly his words fit into the ancient legal setting as we understand it. An important power retained by the father in ancient Israel was controlling whom his sons and daughters would marry. The parents "very often chose a wife for their son, although sometimes the son himself contracted the marriage" (Falk 162, citing Gen. 26:34; 37:46; Judges 14:2, 7). It was the duty of each person to take and be taken in marriage, and it was the obligation of parents to see that their children were married (DJ 11:1049; Clark 128). The importance of this parental duty is reflected in the prophet Jeremiah's command to those leaving Jerusalem shortly after Lehi's departure to "take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and *take wives for your sons*, and give your daughters to husbands" (Jeremiah 29:6; emphasis added).

Lehi acted in accordance with these general principles. He largely controlled whom his sons and daughters married. Through him came the commandments of the Lord that "his sons

should take daughters to wife" and that they should return to Jerusalem to get Ishmael and his family for this very purpose (1 Nephi 7:1-2). As far as we know, no objections were raised by Lehi's sons, nor were their preferences consulted. Furthermore, it is said that by seeing his sons married, Lehi "fulfilled all of the commandments of the Lord which had been given unto him" (1 Nephi 16:8). Thus, Lehi's own obedience to the Lord included the duty of seeing that his sons were married.

[John W. Welch, "Lehi's Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach," in The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure, pp. 62, 66-67]

1 Nephi 7:1 **His Sons Should Take Daughters to Wife:**

Richardson, Richardson and Bentley write that expressions in the Book of Mormon concerning marriage are similar to Hebrew expressions. For example, "his sons should take daughters to wife" (1 Nephi 7:1). In Hebrew, a man does not marry a woman; he takes "her to wife" or "she is given to him to wife." (see John McFadyen, *Key to Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, p. 13)^{xvi} (For biblical examples of such a phrase, see Genesis 24:37; 27:46; 28:2; 28:6; Judges 14:3.

[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. 189] [See Vol. 6, Appendix D]

Geographical Theory Map : 1 Nephi 7:1-4 Nephi Goes up for Ishmael & His Family (Year 001)

1 Nephi 7:2 **The Lord Commanded That [We] Should Return Again unto the Land of Jerusalem, and Bring down Ishmael and His Family:**

Kelly Ogden queries, Could not the Lord have arranged somehow for Ishmael's family to accompany the others into the wilderness on one of the two prior journeys? We have to repeat also the answer: Yet another test!

We might also wonder how another family, without direct revelation from the Lord, would be so willing to abandon their home and all they had known to join these refugees in the wilderness. We can only surmise from the record of Nephi that Ishmael believed the words of the Lord that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed by the enemy armies who already occupied the city.

[D. Kelly Ogden, "Answering the Lord's Call," in Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon, Part 1, p. 30]

Note* I would still ask the question, Why were three journeys into the wilderness required?

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 7:2 **Ishmael:**

According to Hugh Nibley, the proverbial ancestor of the Arabs is Ishmael. His name is one of the few Old Testament names which is also at home in ancient Arabia. . . . [Thus] in Lehi's friend "Ishmael" (1 Nephi 7:2) we surely have a man of the desert. The interesting thing is that Nephi takes Ishmael (unlike Zoram) completely for granted, never explaining who he is or how he fits into the picture--the act of sending for him seems to be the most natural thing in the world, as does the marriage of his daughters with Lehi's sons. Since it has ever been the custom among the desert people for a man to marry the daughter of his paternal uncle (*bint 'ammi*), it is hard to avoid the impression that Lehi and Ishmael were related. There is a remarkable association between the names of Lehi and Ishmael which ties them both to the southern desert, where the legendary birthplace and central shrine of Ishmael was at a place called Be'er Lehai-ro'i.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi In The Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 40]

John Tvedtnes comments on Nibley's claim that the name Ishmael as well as the names Lehi, Lemuel, Alma and Sam are Arabic in origin (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon* 58-60; *Lehi in the Desert* 44-46). Tvedtnes contends that although Ishmael is indeed the name of the son of Abraham who settled that part of Arabia, Ishmael is also the name of a member of the royal family of Judah from the time of Lehi (Jeremiah 40). Thus the name of Ishmael might have been used by more than one people.

[John Tvedtnes, "Was Lehi a Caravaneer?," F.A.R.M.S., p. 8]

1 Nephi 7:2 **Ishmael:**

Bruce Sutton writes that the Prophet Joseph Smith said the following:

You will recollect that when Lehi and his family had gone from Jerusalem out into the wilderness . . . he also brought out Ishmael and his family which were mostly daughters. This Ishmael and his family were of the lineage of Ephraim, and Lehi's sons took Ishmael's daughters for wives, and this is how they have grown together, a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth! If we had those 116 pages of manuscript which Martin Harris got away with, you would know all about it, for Ishmael's ancestry is made very plain therein . . . That is how it came about that Ishmael's lineage, as well as Lehi's was not given in the The Book of Mormon. (*Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Salt Lake City, Genealogical Society, Vol. 23, p. 66)

The main portion of the Book of Mormon was translated from the abridgment written

by Mormon of the Large Plates of Nephi (Words of Mormon 1:1-9), which contained the more detailed history of the Nephites. (1 Nephi 9:2-4). According to Sutton and the above statement, the Large Plates apparently contained the genealogy of Lehi at least back to Manasseh (and Joseph) and also the genealogy of Ishmael at least back to Ephraim (and Joseph). The Bible contains the genealogy from Ephraim and Manasseh back to Adam. Thus when the genealogies of the Large Plates of Nephi and the Bible come together, we have the genealogy of Lehi and Ishmael back to father Adam.

[Bruce S. Sutton, Lehi, Father of Polynesia: Polynesians Are Nephites, p. 159]

1 Nephi 7:5 The Lord Did Soften the Heart of Ishmael . . . That They Took Their Journey with Us:

Hugh Nibley notes that after their hearts are softened, the family of Ishmael are not only willing but they are able to make the trip right then. They don't have to stay six weeks and get ready--settle their affairs, etc. Ishmael was ready to go . . . he was a desert man. . . . This would be out of the question, of course, if the family were a settled family and not used to travel or anything like that, but they had that tradition.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 167]

1 Nephi 7:6 Two of the Sons of Ishmael and Their Families:

According to John L. Sorenson, both Ishmael's sons had "families" (1 Nephi 7:6) who accompanied them. The term "families" implies a wife and at least one child each, but there likely were more children.

[John L. Sorenson, "The Composition of Lehi's Family," in By Study and Also by Faith, p. 188]

1 Nephi 7:7 They Were Desirous to Return unto *the Land of Jerusalem*:

Hugh Nibley points out the line of argument used in 1 Nephi 7:7: "They were desirous to return unto the land of Jerusalem." Notice, the lands of their inheritance were not in the city of Jerusalem but far down where they went to get their property for Laban. The "land of Jerusalem" is a term that was used anciently.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 168]

1 Nephi 7:14 Jeremiah Have They Cast into Prison:

According to the chronological theory of Randall Spackman, this passage may provide one of the most important clues for dating the time of Lehi's "total" departure from the land of

Jerusalem. It seems that the actions taken against Jeremiah and the other prophets were connected with the threats on Lehi's life. Jeremiah 37:4 states that prior to the Egyptian invasion of Palestine to attack the Babylonian army (and thus prior to the five-month lifting of the siege of Jerusalem -- between August 588 B.C.E. and April 587 B.C.E.), "Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him in prison." This respite from the siege allowed Jerusalem to open its gates and augment its siege provisions. During this time Jeremiah attempted to leave the city to go to the land of his inheritance at Anathoth, a village located a few miles north of the city. At the city gate, Jeremiah was seized and charged with deserting to the enemy. He denied the charge, but he was quickly brought before the princes, who beat and imprisoned him. He was placed in a cistern and left to die. Through the pleadings of a servant in Zedekiah's household, Jeremiah was saved from the muddy cistern, but he was kept in prison until after the city was sacked by the Babylonians on July 12, 586 B.C.E. (Jeremiah 38-39).

If Jeremiah 38-39 was the imprisonment referred to by Nephi, and if Nephi learned of this imprisonment on his trip to bring back Ishmael and his family, then Nephi's trip for Ishmael was probably during this lifting of the siege. In fact, given 5 months time and the freedom to come or go from Jerusalem, it is possible (although at this point not proven) that all four main events: (1) Lehi's departure, (2) the trip for Laban's plates, (3) Jeremiah's departure, seizure, and imprisonment, and (4) the trip for Ishmael's family, could have been made during this lifting of the siege.

Thus, the knowledge of Lehi's sons concerning Jeremiah's imprisonment places at least the escape of Ishmael's family (and maybe also the escape of Lehi) *during the lifting of the siege*, or in other words, *between August 588 B.C.E. and April 587 B.C.E.*

[Randall Spackman, "An Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology," F.A.R.M.S., pp. 10-11]

[See Appendix A]

1 Nephi 7:14 **And Jeremiah Have They Cast into Prison:**

Nephi made note of Jeremiah's incarceration (see 1 Nephi 7:14). According to David and JoAnn Seely, these observations raise an important question of whether Lehi and his family departed early in the reign of King Zedekiah . . . or whether the party left Jerusalem just before the final Babylonian conquest of the city. Randall Spackman has brought forward reasons for the later dating that are based largely on Nephi's reference to the imprisonment of Jeremiah (see 1 Nephi 7:14) and the fact that, according to Jeremiah's book, he went to prison in the tenth year of Zedekiah's rule, only months before the Babylonians captured the city (see Jeremiah 32:1-12; 37:15-16,21; 38:6-13,28).^{lxvii} The book of Jeremiah is silent about Jeremiah's activities during the first year of Zedekiah's reign. If Jeremiah was imprisoned at the time, as suggested by the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 7:14), we would not expect to find a reference to this imprisonment in the Bible. But two passages in Jeremiah's book may refer to earlier

imprisonments. In 605 B.C., Jeremiah declared "I am shut up," referring to the fact that he was restricted from going into the temple area (Jeremiah 36:5). The Hebrew word he used (*'atsur*) is ambiguous. It can mean "imprisoned" or "in custody." In fact, it is the word in Jeremiah 33:1 that refers to his imprisonment. Later, in 601 B.C., Jeremiah was punished by being put in "the stocks" (Jeremiah 20:1-6). The Hebrew word used here is also not clear; some translations take it as meaning "imprisoned." Hence, Jeremiah's celebrated imprisonment just before the city fell to the Babylonians in 587 B.C. was not the only instance in which the prophet had been officially restrained.^{lxviii} [David Rolph and JoAnn H. Seely, "Lehi & Jeremiah: Prophets, Priests & Patriarchs," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, FARMS, Vol 8, Num 2, 1999, p. 28] [For more information on the possible relationship between Jeremiah and Zedekiah, see the commentary on Omni 1:18]

1 Nephi 7:15 If Ye Will Return unto Jerusalem Ye Shall Also Perish:

In view of Nephi's warning to Laman and Lemuel that "if ye will return unto Jerusalem ye shall also perish" (1 Nephi 7:15), it seems probable that at this time (while Nephi is returning to the valley of Lemuel with the family of Ishmael) that the destruction of Jerusalem had not fully taken place yet. [See Appendix A]

1 Nephi 7:16 They Sought to Take Away My Life, That They Might Leave Me in the Wilderness:

According to Brant Gardner, whether intentional, by coincidence, or irony the story of Nephi continues to have remarkable parallels to his ancestor Joseph the son of Jacob. Like Joseph he is younger than his brothers. Like Joseph he is prophesied to rule over them. Like Joseph, he becomes rather unpopular with his older brothers, who in this instance appear to have the same designs upon Nephi as Joseph's brothers did on him. In this case, however, the outcome is different. Nephi will end up ruling in a foreign country just like Joseph, and Laman and Lemuel will seek to do that which Joseph's brothers intended to do before selling him to the Midianites--"they sought to take away [his] life that they might leave [him] in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 7:16).

One might also pause to consider the parallels in Nephi's great covenant prayer and the resulting bursting of the bands: "O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even give me strength that I may burst these bands with which I am bound (1 Nephi 7:19).

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, Book of Mormon Commentary, <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi7.htm>, pp. 7-9]

Note* Many of the parallels between Nephi and Joseph of Old are implied in the patriarchal blessing of Nephi's brother Joseph (see the commentary on 2 Nephi 3). Readers should be aware that the patriarchal blessing of Nephi is missing. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 7:16 They Sought to Take Away My Life, That They Might Leave Me in the Wilderness To Be Devoured by Wild Beasts:

According to Hugh Nibley, Nephi's complaint, "they sought to take away my life, that they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts" (1 Nephi 7:16) is ever in the mouth of the Arab poet, for to leave one's enemy lying in the desert to be devoured by wild beasts is standard and correct procedure when Arabs quarrel, and for all its popularity with the poets, no mere figure of speech. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 46]



1 Nephi 7:16 **They did bind me with cords (Illustration):** "My brethren were angry with me . . . and they did bind me with cords, for they sought to take away my life, that they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts," by A&OR. [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1070]

1 Nephi 7:16 **They sought to take away my life (Illustration – not shown):** Brothers Try to Slay Nephi [Gary E. Smith, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 4]

1 Nephi 7:16 They Sought to Take Away My Life, That They Might Leave Me in the Wilderness to Be Devoured by Wild Beasts:

George Potter notes that the Old English form of the word "wilderness" was *wilddeoren*, meaning "of wild beast." This is also descriptive of the region in which Nephi entered Arabia.

This region was anciently called Midian. On their journey from Jerusalem to the valley of Lemuel with Ishmael and his family, Laman and Lemuel rebelled and turned upon their younger brother Nephi. The wounded and probably bleeding Nephi wrote, "they [my brethren] were angry with me. And it came to pass that they did lay their hands upon me, for behold, they were exceedingly wroth, and they did bind me with cords, for they sought to take away my life, that they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts" (1 Nephi 7:16).

The Greek Agatharkides of Cnidos wrote of the ancient land of Midian:

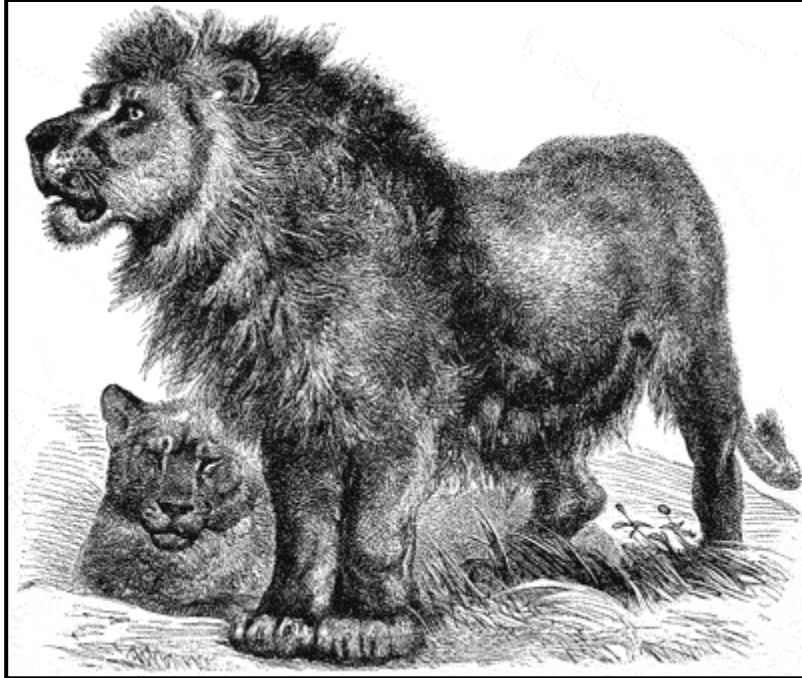
There are many wild camels, many troops of stags and antelopes; also many flocks of sheep, and infinite herds of cattle and mules. Upon these gifts of fortune attends the nuisance that the earth breeds numbers of lions, wolves, and pards; and, that which makes the happiness of the land, causes unhappiness to its inhabitants.^{11xix}

Potter notes that the last lion in Arabia was killed in the region of Midian in 1926.

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 14]



1 Nephi 7:16 **That they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts (Illustration):** Inscriptions of palm trees, camels and lions (Mount Yatib, NW Arabia, Thamudic period first millennium BC). *An Introduction to Saudi Arabian Antiquities*, Dept. of Antiquities and Museums, Ministry of Education, 1975, p. 120). [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 15]



Arabian Lion (now extinct)

betabunny.com

1 Nephi 7:16 That They Might Leave Me in the Wilderness to Be Devoured by Wild Beasts:

Cleon Skousen asserts that the three most ferocious types of desert animals during this early period were the lion, the leopard and the wolf. The lion was especially feared on the desert because these beasts came down out of the barren cliffs so hungry they would attack almost anything alive. The Arabs had such a fear of these predatory creatures that they had more than 400 words relating to the lion (*Hastings Bible Dictionary* under "lion"). [W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1071]

1 Nephi 7:19 One of the Daughters of Ishmael . . . Did Plead:

As Hugh Nibley explains, all that saved Nephi's life while returning to the valley of Lemuel with Ishmael and his family was the pleading of a daughter of Ishmael (1 Nephi 7:19) and her mother -- another authentic touch, since the proud Semite may yield only to entreaties of a woman without losing face. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 70]

According to Nibley, this is a thing that no Arab under any circumstance can resist. If a mother or daughter from another tribe pleads, you are under obligation--even if it is your worst enemy. It's the chivalric oath.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 169]

1 Nephi 7:20 **They Were Sorrowful . . . Insomuch That *They Did Bow down before Me*:**

In 1 Nephi 7:20 we find that after the brothers decided against leaving a bound Nephi in the wilderness, "they were sorrowful . . . insomuch that they did bow down before [Nephi]." Hugh Nibley asks, "Is this plausible?" They might well have given in after being mad and binding him up a little while before. But bowing down before him? According to [Arabic] custom, When you've done a serious wrong to someone, the only way to apologize is to bow down to them. Bowing down was an act of apology and not of submission. They were not bowing down in submission at all. They were still the older brothers, but they apologized for the wrong they had done.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 170]

1 Nephi 7:22 **An Offering unto the Lord:**

We know that Lehi offered sacrifices in the valley of Lemuel ("an offering unto the Lord"--1 Nephi 2:7; "sacrifice and burnt offerings"--1 Nephi 8:9), but we are not told either what he sacrificed or where he obtained what he sacrificed. According to George Potter, the chances are very slim that he would have brought any clean animals with him into the wilderness, so if he did use animals for sacrifice he probably purchased them from local tribesmen, for these tribesmen certainly were there. Kent Brown notes that "in a desert clime all arable land and all water resources have claimants."^{lx} How did Lehi acquire the right to camp in a valley that was controlled by a local tribe? We are not certain why the ruling tribe would have let Lehi camp in the valley, yet this was probably not a serious problem for Lehi. Lehi was a wealthy man, and though he left all his immovable gold and silver in Jerusalem or the land of his inheritance, he probably carried in his provision some form of currency. Since Lehi was not intending to be a long-term resident and had no flocks that would deplete the grazing lands, the tribute was moderate. It is even quite likely that Lehi's family could have on occasion exchanged their services to assist the local tribes.

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 77]

1 Nephi 7:22 **An offering unto the Lord (Altars) (Potter Theory) [Illustration]** Fig. 7.2 George Potter next to the altar that is lightly over waist high. Photograph taken by Bruce Santucci in Wadi Tayyib al-Isim (proposed Valley of Lemuel). [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 137]

1 Nephi 7:22 **An offering unto the Lord (Altars) (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Fig. 7.3 Altar position on the top of the hill immediately above the circle next to the east grove. (Bruce Santucci sitting next to the altar). Photograph taken by George Potter in Wadi Tayyib al-Isim (proposed Valley of Lemuel). [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of

Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 137]

1 Nephi 7:22 **An offering unto the Lord (Altars) (Potter Theory) [Illustration]:** Second pile of stones atop a mountain that appears to have been an altar. Photo by George Potter in Wadi Tayyib al-Isa (proposed Valley of Lemuel). [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 139]

1 Nephi 7:22 **They Did Offer Sacrifice and Burnt Offerings:**

According to Kent Brown, when Lehi's family initially set up its base camp not far from the Red Sea (1 Nephi 2:5-6), Lehi "built an altar of stones" and thereafter "made an offering . . . and gave thanks unto the Lord (1 Nephi 2:7). On two subsequent occasions, Lehi's party not only gave "thanks unto . . . God," but offered "sacrifice and burnt offerings" (1 Nephi 5:9; 1 Nephi 7:22). Each set of offerings came after the return of Lehi's sons from extended trips back to Jerusalem. . . . One might wonder, why were burnt offerings made on the two later occasions and not at first? What was the difference?

The difference is the presence of sin, real or perceived. In each of the three instances--the family's arriving at the base camp, the return of the sons with the brass plates, and their later return with Ishmael's family--the common factors are a safe journey and the subsequent giving of thanks. We then ask, How much do these observations tell us about the sacrifices? A lot.

For a safe journey, according to Psalm 107, a person was to "sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving" (Psalm 107:22) for safety in travel, whether through the desert or on water (Psalm 107:4-6, 19-30). What were those "sacrifices of thanksgiving"? They consisted of peace offerings, known from Leviticus 3. . . . The sacrifice itself was to be an animal--either "male or female" in this case--from the flock or herd (Leviticus 3:1,6,12), accompanied by unleavened baked goods (Leviticus 7:12-13). Peace offerings were "the most common type of sacrifice," an offering accompanied by a "covenant meal" in which worshipers enjoyed "fellowship with one another and their God." Truly such occasions were to be a time of rejoicing. . . .

We now turn to the need for the burnt offerings. Why, one may ask, did Lehi offer this other kind of sacrifice? In response we note that according to Leviticus 1, a burnt offering was made for atonement--and more specifically, purging--after one had committed sin. . . . In the ceremony of the burnt offering, before slaughtering the sacrificial animal, the petitioner placed a "hand upon the head of the burnt offering" (Leviticus 1:4), thus transferring guilt to the animal.^{lxxi} . . .

In the trip of Lehi's sons back to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass, one does not need to look far to find sin. . . . While some of these sinful occurrences may seem mild, involving

complaints and a family scuffle, another one was not, for it involved what some might have considered a homicide. Nephi killed Laban (1 Nephi 4:4-18), creating a need for sacrifice. . . . Although the Lord clearly placed Laban among "the wicked" (1 Nephi 4:13) and although Nephi knew Laban's failings because "he had sought to take away [Nephi's] life" and "also had taken away our property" (1 Nephi 4:11), Nephi "shrunk and would that I might not slay" Laban (1 Nephi 4:10). In the end, however, Nephi "did obey the voice of the Spirit, and . . . I smote off [Laban's] head with his own sword" (1 Nephi 4:18), thus creating the deepest need for Lehi to "offer . . . burnt offerings unto the Lord" to purge any vestiges of uncleanness that might have clung to Nephi (1 Nephi 5:9). It might be noted here that even though laws existed that would protect Nephi until he received a fair hearing, as Reynolds points out,^{lxxii} the killing of Laban potentially brought sin within Lehi's camp.

The second time that Lehi sacrificed burnt offerings came after the return of his sons with the family of Ishmael (1 Nephi 7:3-22). Where was the sin? . . . Nephi, not shy in expressing his feelings about his brothers' "rebellion," became embroiled in a heated exchange of words that eventually provoked his angry brothers into tying him up "with cords" so "that they might leave [him] in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts" (1 Nephi 7:7,16). . . . Even though Nephi "did frankly forgive them all that they had done" (1 Nephi 7:21), there still remained the necessity to purge their sin from themselves. . . . As a result, after the party reached the camp Lehi found it necessary to "offer . . . burnt offerings" to the Lord (1 Nephi 7:22).

Thus, the three recorded occasions of Lehi offering sacrifices, when measured against sacrificial law in the Bible, become immediately understandable in light of the family's situation. When Lehi "made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks" (1 Nephi 2:7; 1 Nephi 5:9; 1 Nephi 7:22), he was sacrificing a peace offering which served as a thanksgiving for safety in travel, whether for oneself or for others. In each instance, members of the family had safely completed a long journey. When he offered "burnt offerings unto the Lord" (1 Nephi 5:9; 1 Nephi 7:22), Lehi was bringing to the altar sacrifices that would atone for sin, sin that would stain the camp and those within it. And in each case, one can readily detect sin in the prior behavior of family members, whether it took the form of complaining, family jousts, or the taking of human life. Here, Lehi sought to free his extended family from the taint of unworthiness so that he and they would be able to carry out the purposes of the Lord. [S. Kent Brown, "What Were Those Sacrifices Offered by Lehi?" in From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon, pp. 1-8]

1 Nephi 7:22 **They Did Offer Sacrifice and [Offer] Burnt Offerings:**

The word "offer" was omitted on the Printers Manuscript in the process of copying from the Original Manuscript and has never been printed in any edition. Restoring this word provides another example of the Hebrew cognate accusative form ("offer an offering"). [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 16]

1 Nephi 8:1 All Manner of Seeds of Every Kind:

Hugh Nibley claims that Lehi's party took grain with them and "all manner of seed of every kind" (1 Nephi 8:1). The Arabs, as we shall see . . . do this when they migrate in earnest, packing the seed in big, black 150- to 180-pound sacks, two to a camel. At the very least there has to be enough grain either to make a worth-while crop somewhere or to supply substantial food on the way--and who could carry such a load on his back? To pass through the heart of Arabia on the best camel in the world requires almost superhuman endurance--no need to make the thing ridiculous by carrying children, tents, books, food, furniture, weapons, and grain on one's back! [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 55]



1 Nephi 8:1 All manner of seeds (Illustration): We found in the market at Nizwa, Oman, wheat, barley, asfar, sugar, pepper, and other condiments. Foodstuffs such as these might have been the type of stores collected by Lehi's party as they prepared for their journey to the promised land. [Lynn and Hope Hilton, In Search of Lehi's Trail, p. 58]

1 Nephi 8:1 All Manner of Seeds of Every Kind:

According to the theory of George Potter, the valley at the southern end of Wadi Tayyib al-Isma' was the valley of Lemuel. He writes that if the river portion of this valley was uncultivated at the time Lehi's family arrived, then this long thin strip of land might have been granted to the family to work, since there were many strong hands to work and relatively few mouths to support. The family could afford to farm an area that was not cost effective to others. This could have been a reason for Nephi bringing back "seeds of every kind." (1 Nephi 8:1). [George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One:

1 Nephi 8:1 Seeds of Every Kind . . . Seeds of Fruit:

While journeying in the wilderness, Lehi dreams about a dark and dreary wilderness and a tree of life. Nephi records this dream and Lehi's ensuing concern for his children in 1 Nephi 8, beginning with verse 2. But in verse 1 of the same chapter he records, "And it came to pass that we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind." Why is the information of the seed-gathering recorded here? It doesn't seem to have anything to do with Lehi's dream--or does it? The reference to "fruit of every kind" prepares our minds for the central symbol of Lehi's dream: the fruit of the tree of life, a fruit "desirable above all other fruit" (1 Nephi 8:12). The "seeds" anticipate Lehi's concern for his own "seed" (verse 3); and the repetition of "every kind" foreshadows the variety of people and paths in the dream. [Dennis and Sandra Packard, "Pondering the Word," in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, FARMS, Vol 8, Num 2, 1999, p. 57]

Note* The information concerning the gathering of "seeds of every kind" could well be linked to the story of Nephi and his brethren retrieving Ishmael and his daughters. For it puts a finishing touch on the beginning of the story in 1 Nephi 7:1-2, which says the following:

And now I would that ye might know, that after my father, Lehi, had made an end of *prophesying concerning his seed*, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto him again, saying that it was not meet for him, Lehi, that he should take his family into the wilderness alone; but that his sons should take daughters to wife, *that they might raise up seed unto the Lord* in the land of promise. And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that I, Nephi, and my brethren, should again return unto the land of Jerusalem, and bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness.

Thus, the most significant "seeds" which Nephi brought back with him involved the daughters of Ishmael, and were the "seeds" of the future descendants of Lehi (the tribe of Joseph, which held the covenant birthright of the house of Israel).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

NOTES

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- i. A Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, p. 129.
- ii. William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths*, University of London, The Athlone Press: London, 1968, pp. 25-26.
- iii. Horace D. Hummel, Bible: Bible Research and Criticism," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 4, Keter Publishing House Ltd.: Jerusalem, 1971, page 93; compare Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, page 32; Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 1967, pages 26, 30.
- iv. Robert J. Boling, "Synonymous Parallelism in the Psalms," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 5, 1960, pages 221-225, cited in Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pages 27-28.
- v. Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pages 25-26.
- vi. Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, page 29.
- vii. Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press: Nashville, 1973, page 104.
- viii. Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, page 34 (N.Y. edition, page 38)..
- ix. On Jacob/Israel: see E. A. Speiser, "Introduction," *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1964, pages 293-294.
- x. Speiser's "Introduction," pages 289-293. Nibley's *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pages 186-8. I am indebted to Benjamin Urrutia for drawing this to my attention.
- xi. Robert F. Smith (personal communication) has suggested that this title may represent the Tetragrammaton, and thus be equivalent to Yahweh or Jehovah. That may be so, but then it is difficult to see why Joseph Smith, the translator, specifically used the term Jehovah at all.
- xii. Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pages 30, 94, 164.
- xiii. See, for example, John Hyde Jr., *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: Fetridge, 1857), 217-18; M. T. Lamb, *The Golden Bible* (New York: Ward and Drummond, 1887), 11; and Stuart Martin, *The Mystery of Mormonism* (New York: Dutton, 1920), 27; see also William J. Hamblin, "Sacred Writing on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean," (FARMS, 1994) for full references and analysis of the issues raised in this article.
- xiv. Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 107.
- xv. Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 30.
- xvi. Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, trans. A. F. Rainey, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 129.

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- xvii. The LDS Bible (1979 edition), Map #6, *The Ancient World at the Time of the Patriarchs*, agrees with the early Islamic geographers on the location of Midian in Arabia next to the Gulf of Aqaba. The first Western explorers in the area agreed that the northwest corner of Arabia was Midian. Beke (1834), Burton (see Sir Richard Burton, *The Gold Mines of Midian, and the ruined Midianite cities*, 1878 [Cambridge, England: Oleaner, 1979]), Wallhausen (1886), Sayce (1894), Moore (1895), Shede (1897), Gall (1898), Gunket (1903), Meyer (1906), Schmidt (1908), Gressmann (1913), Haupt (1914) and Musil (1911) [see www.anchorstone.com].
- xviii. Abdulla Al-Wohabi, *The Northern Hijaz in the Writings of the Arab Geographers 800-1150 B.C.*, p. 142.
- xix. Abdulla Al-Wohabi, *The Northern Hijaz in the Writings of the Arab Geographers 800-1150 B.C.*, p. 142.
- xx. Al-Wohabi, p. 142.
- xxi. Al-Wohabi, 140.
- xxii. Burton, p. 169.
- xxiii. H. St. John Philby, *The Land of Midian* (London: Ernest Bean Limited), p. 222.
- xxiv. Qur'an 19:52, see Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation, footnote 2601 which implies that the right side was the east side.
- xxv. Al-Wohaibi, p. 141.
- xxvi. Burton, 108.
- xxvii. Eng. Zaki M. A. Farsi, *Map and Guide of Tabuk*, (Jeddah: Farsi).
- xxviii. Stuart Martin, *The Mystery of Mormonism* (London: Odhams, 1920), 44.
- xxix. Robert Maddin, James D. Muhly, and Tamara S. Wheeler, "How the Iron Age Began," *Scientific American* 237/4 (October 1977): 127.
- xxx. Robert Maddin, James D. Muhly, and Tamara S. Wheeler, "How the Iron Age Began," *Scientific American* 237/4 (October 1977): 121. The knife shows evidence of quenching. See Tamara S. Wheeler and Robert Maddin, "Metallurgy and Ancient Man," in *The Coming Age of Iron* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).
- xxxi. Robert Maddin, James D. Muhly, and Tamara S. Wheeler, "How the Iron Age Began," *Scientific American* 237/4 (October 1977): 127.
- xxxii. Robert Maddin, James D. Muhly, and Tamara S. Wheeler, "How the Iron Age Began," *Scientific American* 237/4 (October 1977): 131.
- xxxiii. Hershell Shanks, "Antiquities Director Confronts Problems and Controversies," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12/4 (July--August 1986): 33, 35.
- xxxiv. Hershell Shanks, "Antiquities Director Confronts Problems and Controversies," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12/4 (July--August 1986): 33.

xxxv. The text goes on to specify that it was not with a sword that Moses slew the Egyptian, but with "the word." This was intended to explain why the Hebrew text of Exodus 2:14 adds *omer* (here understood to mean "word") before "as thou killedst the Egyptian." The extra word may be a dittograph from the preceding line, but the interpretation in *Abot de Rabbi Nathan* is interesting in light of other passages that compare the word of God to a rod or sword. See John A. Tvedtnes, "Rod and Sword as the word of God," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996), 148-155.

xxxvi. Genesis Rabbah 94/11 on 46:26.

xxxvii. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913-25), 3:409-11. In the *Aggadah*, Laban is identified with Balaam's father Beor (Numbers 22:5), the name Laban being interpreted as "he shone with wickedness," an excellent characterization of Nephi's adversary named Laban; see C. Roth, "Laban in the Aggadah," in C. Roth, ed., *Encyclopædia Judaica*, 15 vols. (Jerusalem: Macmillan and Keter, 1971), 10:1315-17; T. K. Cheyne, W. M. Müller, and S. A. Cook, "Phinehas," in T. K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black, eds., *Encyclopædia Biblica*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1899-1903), 3:3727-30; Numbers 31:8; Joshua 13:22. Traditionally, Levi beheld a vision of the third heaven where an angel of God gave him a shield and a sword. See Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2:194-96.

xxxviii. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913-25), 3:409-11.

xxxix. The Mandaeans, who number a few ten thousand in Iraq and Iran, claim to be the descendants of the disciples of John the Baptist. Their religion contains many elements common to early Christianity, Judaism, and pagan religions of ancient Mesopotamia.

xl. See Wilhelm Nowack, *Lehrbuch der Hebraischen Archaeologie* [Freiburg i/B-Leipzig: Mohr, 1894], p. 300; and Harry Torczyner, *The Lachish Letters* [London: Oxford University Press, 1938].

xli. See James W. Jack, "The Lachish Letters--Their Date and Import," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly*, [1938], p. 176. Compare to William F. Albright, "A Brief History of Judah from the Days of Josiah to Alexander the Great," *Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 9, [February 1946], p. 4

xlii. William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, edited by E. Kautzsch [Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1956], p. 377. Cited by Angela Crowell in "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," *Zarahemla Record*, (1982), p. 4:)

xliii. Phyllis A. Bird, "Women," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:952

xliv. See K. Roubos, "Biblical Institutions," in *The World of the Bible*, ed. A. S. Van Der Woude (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 1:353.

xlv. Doughty, *Travels*, 278, 280; See Wendell Phillips, *Unknown Oman* (New York: David McKay Co., 1966), 141.

xlvi. Doughty, *Travels*, 570.

xlvii. See Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Semester 1* (Provo: Utah: FARMS, 1993), 58-105.

xlvi. For details and sources on the importance of archetypes in the Book of Mormon, see Alan Goff, "Boats, Beginnings, and Repetitions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 67-84. For an introduction to the notion of type-scenes, see Goff, "Uncritical Theory and Thin Description: The Resistance to History," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 187-207.

xlix. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

i. See 2 Samuel 24:11; 1 Chronicles 21:9; 25:5; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 19:2; 29:25, 30; 35:15; Amos 7:12.

ii. The word is used of the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 9:9, 11; 1 Chronicles 9:22; 26:28; 29:29, of the priest Zadok in 2 Samuel 15:27, and of the prophet Hanani in 2 Chronicles 16:7, 10 (Hanani is termed a *hozeh* in 2 Chronicles 19:2).

iii. This record is always scripturally referred to as being engraven on the "plates of brass," and never on "brass plates." For an excellent article comparing the teachings from the Plates of Brass cited in the Book of Mormon with the teachings from the Book of Moses (Pearl of Great Price) later revealed to Joseph Smith, and how these contrasted with the Book of Abraham, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *By Study And Also By Faith, Vol. 2*, (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Company and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1990), 136-173.

iiii. There are 27 occurrences of the phrase "plates of brass" in our current Book of Mormon: 1 Nephi 3:3,12,24; 4:16,24,38; 5:10,14,18,19; 13:23; 19:21,22; 22:1,30; 2 Nephi 4:2,15; 5:12; Omni 1:14; Mosiah 1:3,16; 10:16; 28:11,20; Alma 37:3; 3 Nephi 1:2; 10:17.

lv. See Monte S. Nyman, "The Restoration of Plain and Precious Parts: The Book of Helaman," in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *Helaman Through 3 Nephi 8, According To Thy Word* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1992), 147-61.

lv. The classical defense of the sixth century date for Daniel, a hotly debated topic, comes from Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, 2 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1917, 1938); later reprinted in one volume (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979).

lvi. Kaiser is beholden to his teacher R. Laird Harris for setting forth this concept in his book, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible: An Historical and Exegetical Study* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1957), pp. 166-79.

lvii. The writings of several prophets that are preserved on the brass plates are not found in the Old Testament: Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias (see 1 Nephi 19:10; Helaman 8:19-20).

lviii. Tsvi Schneider, "Six Biblical Signatures,," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17, no. 4 (1991): 26-33; and Hershel Shanks, "Jeremiah's Scribe and Confidant Speaks from a Hoard of Clay Bullae," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13, no. 5 (1987): 58-65.

lix. Hershel Shanks, "Fingerprint of Jeremiah's Scribe," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22 (March/ April 1996): 36-37.

lx. For Joseph Smith as a descendant of Joseph of Egypt, see 2 Nephi 3:7-19; JST, Genesis 50:24-38; D&C 113:1-6; see also the Prophet's patriarchal blessing, as given by his father, Joseph Smith, Sr., in *Our Lineage* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1933), 14.

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- lxi. For this concept and the discussion that is to follow, Kaiser is beholden in the main to T. Desmond Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev: A Source-Critical Investigation of Genesis 20:1-22:19* (London: Paternoster, 1997). For an expansion of the chart that follows, see p. 105.
- lxii. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 6th ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1927), p. 316; reprinted as *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Meridian, 1957).
- lxiii. See Cyrus H. Gordon, "Biblical Customs and the Nuzi Tablets," *Biblical Archaeologist* 3 (1940): 1-12; "Hebrew Origins in the Light of Recent Discoveries," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963): pp. 3-14; William F. Albright, *Archaeology, Historical Analogy and Early Biblical History*, chap. 2: "The Story of Abraham in Light of New Archaeological Data" (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), pp. 22-41. Another scholar should be added to this famous duo, Ephraim Speiser, *Genesis: Anchor Bible Commentary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964).
- lxiv. Pere Roland de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel*, trans. D. Smith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978), 1:200; original French ed.: *Histoire ancienne d'Israel* (Paris: Gabalda, 1971); and John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 91.
- lxv. David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992, p. 109.
- lxvi. See McFadyen, John, Key to *Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, 3rd edition [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1951], p. 13. Cited in Cheesman, *Ancient Writing on Metal Plates*, p. 19.
- lxvii. Randall P. Spackman, "Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Principal Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates." (FARMS, 1993), 6-14; and JBMS 7/1 (19998): 57-59.
- lxviii. See W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1:1-10, for a chronology of events in Jeremiah's prophetic career.
- lxix. Richard Francis Burton, *The Gold-Mines of Midian, and the Ruined Midianite Cities (1878)*, Oleander, Cambridge, 1979, p. 108.
- lxx. Brown, p. 206.
- lxxi. See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 150-53.
- lxxii. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension of Nephi's Small Plates," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1987): 15-37.