

1 Nephi

Chapter 8

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[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 78]

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]

1 Nephi 8:2 I Have Dreamed a Dream:

According to Hugh Nibley, Anti Mormons¹ have written saying, "Well, Joseph Smith, Sr. had a dream like this. Once he dreamed he was in the woods, and there were a lot of stumps there." But this is the most common of dreams. [Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 170]

Note* For the benefit of the reader, the following is the story referred to as told by Joseph Smith's mother:

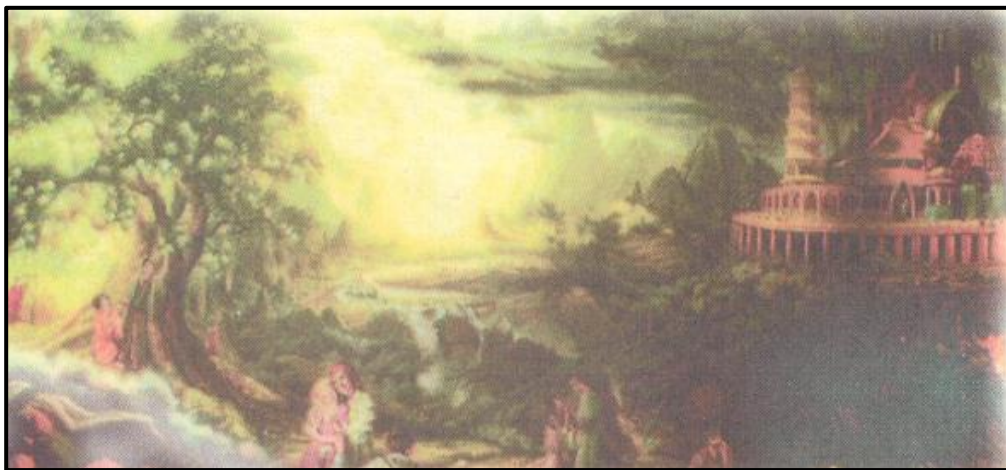
In 1811, we moved from Royalton, Vermont, to the town of Lebanon, New Hampshire. Soon after arriving here, my husband received another very singular vision, which I relate:

"I thought," said he, "I was traveling in an open, desolate field, which appeared to be very barren. As I was thus traveling, the thought suddenly came into my mind that I had better stop and reflect upon what I was doing, before I went any farther. So I asked myself, 'What motive can I have in traveling here, and what place can this be?' My guide, who was by my side, as before, said, 'This is the desolate world; but travel on.' The road was so broad and barren that I wondered why I should travel in it; for, said I to myself, 'Broad is the road, and wide is the gate that leads to death, and many there be that walk therein; but narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leads to everlasting life, and few there be that go in thereat.' Traveling a short distance further, I came to a narrow path. This path I entered, and, when I had traveled a little way in it, I beheld a beautiful stream of water, which ran from the east to the west. Of this stream, I could see neither the source nor yet the mouth; but as far as my eyes could extend I could see a rope, running along the bank of it, about as high as a man could reach, and beyond me was a low, but very pleasant valley, in which stood a tree such as I had never seen before. It was exceedingly handsome, insomuch that I looked upon it with wonder and admiration. It's beautiful branches spread themselves somewhat like an umbrella, and it bore a kind of fruit, in shape much like a chestnut bur, and as white as snow, or, if possible, whiter. I gazed upon the same with considerable interest, and as I was doing so, the burs or shells commenced opening and shedding their particles, or the fruit which they contained, which was of dazzling whiteness. I drew near and began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond description. As I was eating, I said in my heart, 'I cannot eat this alone, I must bring my wife and children, that they may partake with me.' Accordingly, I went and brought my family, which consisted of a wife and seven children, and we all commenced eating and praising God for this blessing. We were exceedingly happy, insomuch that our joy could not easily be expressed. While thus engaged, I beheld a spacious building standing opposite the valley which we were in,

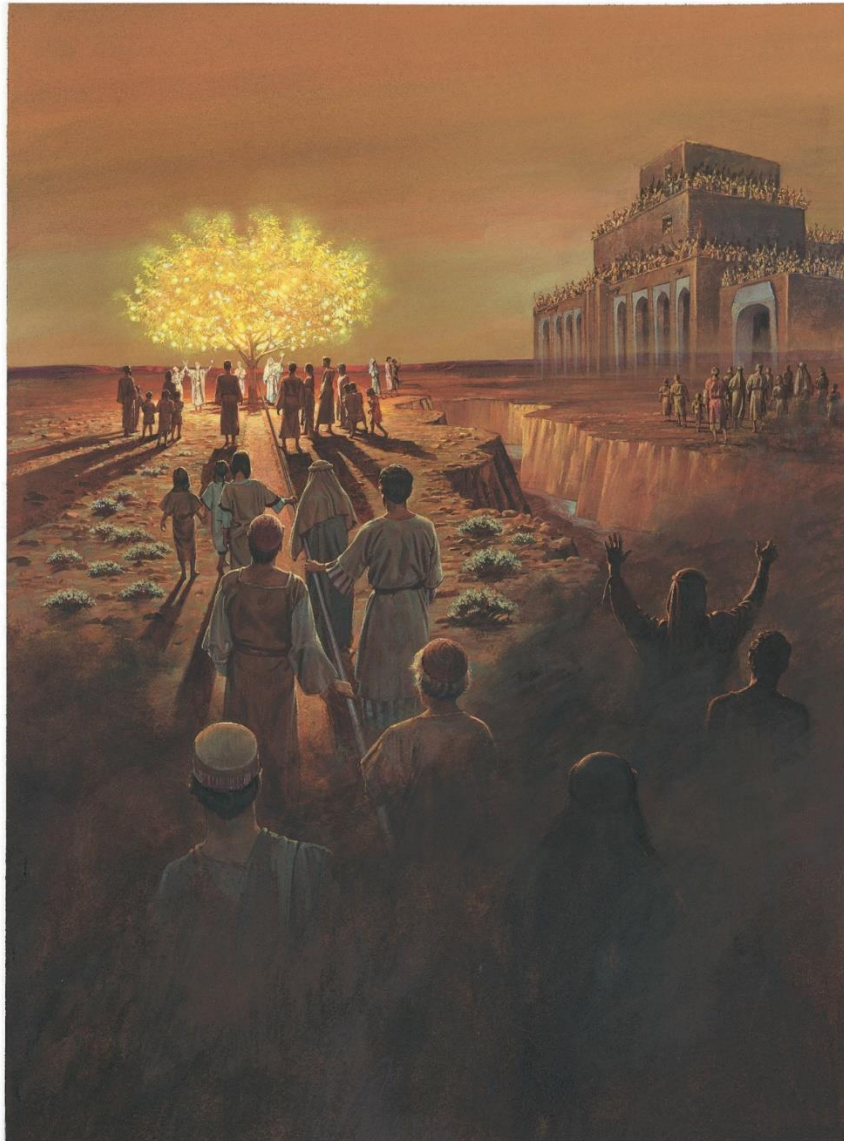
and it appeared to reach to the very heavens. It was full of doors and windows, and they were all filled with people, who were very finely dressed. When these people observed us in the low valley, under the tree, they pointed the finger of scorn at us, and treated us with all manner of disrespect and contempt. But their contumely we utterly disregarded. I presently turned to my guide and inquired of him the meaning of the fruit that was so delicious. He told me it was the pure love of God, shed abroad in the hearts of all those who love him, and keep his commandments. He then commanded me to go and bring the rest of my children. I told him that we were all there. 'No,' he replied, 'look yonder, you have two more, and you must bring them also.' Upon raising my eyes, I saw two small children, standing some distance off. I immediately went to them, and brought them to the tree; upon which they commenced eating with the rest, and we all rejoiced together. The more we ate, the more we seemed to desire, until we even got down upon our knees and scooped it up, eating it by double handfuls. After feasting in this manner a short time, I asked my guide what was the meaning of the spacious building which I saw. He replied, 'It is Babylon, it is Babylon, and it must fall. The people in the doors and windows are the inhabitants thereof, who scorn and despise the saints of God because of their humility.' I soon awoke, clapping my hands together for joy." (Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, pp. 48-50)

Lucy Mack Smith was in her seventieth year when this history was dictated in 1845. Thus, the fine details and wording of this story might not be exactly as they were originally related by Joseph Smith Sr. nearly 34 years earlier. Nevertheless, it is interesting that in a parallel manner, both Joseph Smith Jr. and Nephi the son of Lehi were able to repeat the same phrase, "I saw the things which my father saw" (1 Nephi 14:29).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]



1 Nephi 8:2 **Behold, I have dreamed a dream (Illustration):** Lehi's Dream [Steven Lloyd Neal, Verse Markers, Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 5]



Lehi's Dream, by Jerry Thompson, © 1987 IRI

1 Nephi 8: 2 **Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision (Illustration):** Lehi saw many people in his dream. . . . Illustrators: Jerry Thompson and Robert T. Barrett. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Book of Mormon Stories, p. 20]

1 Nephi 8:2 **I dreamed a dream (Lehi's Dream) [Illustration – not shown]:** Artist Conception of Lehi's Dream / Lehi's Dream Explained (1 Nephi 8, 11, 12, 15). [John D. Hawkes, Book of Mormon Digest, pp. 18-19]



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1 Nephi 8:2 **Behold, I have dreamed a dream (Illustration):** Lehi's Dream. An illustration of Lehi's dream. Artist: Greg K. Olsen. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families, 1999, p. 21]

1 Nephi 8:2 **I Have Dreamed a Dream:**

According to an article by John A. Tvedtnes, cognates are related words that come from the same root. For example, the English noun *student* is cognate to the verb *study* and the adjective *studious*. In Hebrew, a verb is sometimes followed by a noun that is a cognate, such as "*wrote upon it a writing*" (Exodus 39:30) and "*she vowed a vow*" (1 Samuel 1:11). . . Someone writing in English would be more likely to use "she vowed" or "she made a vow." One of the best examples of this in the Book of Mormon is "I have *dreamed a dream*" (1 Nephi 8:2).. That is exactly the way that the same idea is expressed in literal translation of the Old Testament Hebrew (see Genesis 37:5; 41:11).

[John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon" in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, F.A.R.M.S., p. 80]

1 Nephi 8:2 **I Have Dreamed a Dream; or in Other Words I Have Seen a Vision:**

According to Daniel Peterson, when Lehi says, "I have dreamed a dream; or in other words I have seen a vision" (1 Nephi 8:2) not only is the first part of the sentence of Semitic construction (a perfect cognate accusative) but also the second part, "I have seen a vision" (though we lose something in English). You have to remember that English is based on two different languages. English is a hybrid of a sort of Latin or French with a Germanic language--the Anglo-Saxons and then the Norman Conquest, of course. So you have two different words for many things, a sort of low Germanic word and a high Latin-style word. . . . With the words "I

have seen a vision"--what he's really saying is "I have seen a seeing." The Latin word *seeing* was related to the word for vision, and you have a related German word, *sehen*, or "I have seen a vision," using the Latin word. But in the original it was probably something like: "Behold I have dreamed a dream; or in other words, I have seen a seeing." so I use this verse in the Book of Mormon in my Arabic grammar class, just to make a point to the students. Now, I ask you how a nineteenth-century farm boy could have come up with something like that, which is a perfect illustration of an Arabic grammatical point. Probably he did a lot of his work in the graduate school there at Palmyra University--well, of course there wasn't such a place. And there was no such Joseph Smith. This came to him via another route, not through academic study.

[Daniel C. Peterson, "A Scholar Looks at Evidences for the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S., p. 30-31]

1 Nephi 8:2 **I Have Dreamed a Dream:**

Hugh Nibley states that the substance of Lehi's dreams is highly significant, since men's dreams necessarily represent, even when inspired, the things they see by day, albeit in strange and wonderful combinations. It is common for men in every age, for example, to dream of ships, but a man in Lehi's day must dream of particular kinds of ships, and no others will do.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 43]

Note* In other words, the Book of Mormon student should pay careful attention to the imagery in Lehi's dream, for it reveals his cultural background. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 8:2 **I Have Dreamed a Dream:**

In 1 Nephi 2:11, Lehi states "I have dreamed a dream; or in other words, I have seen a vision." Brant Gardner notes that the prophetic mode of communication to Lehi [and Nephi--see 1 Nephi 11] was through the medium of dreams or visions. In the Old Testament this was one of a set of acceptable means of receiving communication from God. One of the most famous dreamers of the Old Testament was Joseph (for instance Genesis 37:5-10). Joseph not only received a dream which indicated that he would eventually rule over his brethren, . . . but he was also put in a position as dream interpreter for the king (of Egypt).

[Brant Gardner, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, 1Nephi/1Nephi 2, p. 1]

Note* The Book of Mormon student should note that Lehi and Nephi were descendants of Joseph (1 Nephi 5:14), and in their prophetic callings they apparently held the keys to the birthright blessings of Joseph. That is, Nephi would rule over his brethren (both those of his immediate family (1 Nephi 2:22) and of the world) and would be the dream interpreter for the King (or the interpreter of God's plans for Lehi's children and the children of the world).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 8:2 **Behold, I Have Dreamed a Dream:**

Dana Pike writes:

“Behold, I have dreamed a dream,” Lehi announced to his family one morning in the valley of Lemuel in northwestern Arabia (1 Nephi 8:2; see also 9:1; 10:16). This dream and its subsequent interpretation (given in vision to Nephi) provide a powerful Christ-centered foundation for the whole Book of Mormon.[1]

Of course, Lehi’s dream of his family, a tree, and its fruit was not the first revelatory dream he had received. Nephi indicates that his father, Lehi, had written an account of his own prophetic ministry that included “many things which he saw in visions and in dreams” (1 Nephi 1:16). The Lord had already communicated his will to Lehi through dreams on such important points as the command to leave Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2:1–2)[2] and to have his sons return to Jerusalem to retrieve the scripture record on the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 3:2). However, we do not have reports of these dreams, only references to them.

The account of Lehi’s dream in 1 Nephi 8 has great significance in the Book of Mormon as a whole due to its length and detail, its warning about the spiritual status of Lehi’s family, and its focus on the beauty and power of Christ’s Atonement. These features, combined with this dream’s prominent location early in the Book of Mormon, raise intriguing questions about dreams and revelation. Is it significant that this major revelation came to Lehi in a dream? Were dreams a legitimate and frequent means of revelation in ancient Israel? Is the report of Lehi’s dream in 1 Nephi 8 similar to reports of revelatory dreams in the Bible? If so, how can understanding biblical dream reports help us better appreciate the account of Lehi’s dream, his family’s reactions to it, and the role it plays in the greater whole of the Book of Mormon? Surprising as it may seem, such questions have not been discussed in previous Latter-day Saint studies on the report of Lehi’s dream. Besides providing general commentary on Lehi’s dream in 1 Nephi 8,[3] authors have studied it from a literary perspective,[4] emphasized the doctrinal aspects of its symbolism,[5] and tried to connect the symbolism with Arabian desert traditions[6] and even ancient Egyptian symbolism.[7] However, I am unaware of any analysis of Lehi’s dream in the context of biblical and other ancient Near Eastern dream reports (the Near East is essentially the same region as the Middle East), although Lehi and his family had lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem and were presumably familiar with revelatory dream reports in their biblical tradition as well as inspired dreams claimed by their Israelite contemporaries.

According to Pike, by understanding the scriptural and cultural context of Israelite dream reports and interpretations as preserved in the Bible, we can achieve a more insightful understanding of Lehi’s dream (and his son Nephi’s corollary interpretive vision), both by way of general background as well as specific insights. He cites four relevant general observations:

1. Nephi's Sources: We are entirely dependent on what Nephi included on his small set of plates for the report of Lehi's dream in 1 Nephi chapter 8.

(a) Nephi reports that Lehi shared the dream with his family (see 1 Nephi 8:2; 9:1).

(b) Many of the details included by Nephi on the small plates were presumably taken from what Lehi had recorded in his own record, and which Nephi had included of Lehi's record on his large set of plates. (see 1 Nephi 1:17; 19:1–2).[8] This is illustrated by the fact that Nephi began his report of Lehi's dream by quoting his father's record: "I [Lehi] have dreamed. . . . I did go forth. . . . I saw" (1 Nephi 8:2, 11, 21). However, Nephi later paraphrased his father's record: "Now I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father. But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes" (vv. 29–30; see also vv. 31–33)

(c) Nephi also had his own vision regarding his father's dream (see 1 Nephi 11–14)

2. Dreams and visions. In the greater ancient Near East, dreams and visions were considered similar, legitimate forms of visual revelation that the recipient experienced internally. Ancient people were less interested in whether the recipient was asleep or awake and more concerned about the reality of what was seen or heard. In the Bible, the terms dream and vision sometimes occur in parallel (see Isaiah 29:7: "as a dream of a night vision;" see also Job 4:13; Daniel 7:1–2).

3. Language: Lehi's expression "I have dreamed a dream" (1 Nephi 3:2; 8:2) may sound awkward in English, but it is an example of the use of a cognate accusative or cognate object that occurs in Hebrew and some other Semitic languages. In this construction, the verb and the object are derived from the same lexical root.[13] Other examples of this feature in scripture include Genesis 37:5 ("Joseph dreamed a dream"), 1 Samuel 1:11 ("And [Hannah] vowed a vow"), 1 Nephi 14:7 ("I will work a great and a marvelous work"), and 2 Nephi 5:15 ("I did teach my people to build buildings"). The fact that it occurs in the Bible in connection with dream reports provides an interesting link to the report of Lehi's dream.

4. Lehi's dream (Chap. 8) verses Nephi's vision (Chaps. 11–14). Some have claimed that Lehi dreamed essentially what Nephi later saw in his vision,[14]

However, Nephi might have seen more.

(a) Nephi notes that he did not include "all the words of [his] father" in reporting Lehi's dream (1 Nephi 8:29; see also 8:36; 9:1; 10:2, 15).

(b) Nephi specifically requested "to know the interpretation" of the tree (1 Nephi 11:11).

(c) What was shown to Nephi about the tree—the mortal ministry and sacrifice of God the Son (1 Nephi 11:11–36)—does not seem to have been shown to Lehi (otherwise why would Nephi have asked?),

[Note* One should keep in mind that “to know” is a covenant term and it relates to ones OWN covenant salvation—something that Lehi could NOT give to his son, either because Lehi withheld certain sacred details, or because Nephi had to experience it himself in his own covenant process of “knowing” which again involves more just hearing about something from your father.]

(d) What was shown to Nephi does not fit the style of Lehi’s dream. Lehi’s dream is presented as a spiritual allegory, while Nephi presents his own vision as a chronological, God-influenced history [15]

[Note* If Nephi wrote what he did to substantiate his own right to “kingship,” it might have been more important for Nephi to relate his own interpretation of a symbolic dream. Again Nephi specifically notes that he did not include “all the words of [his] father.”]

Pike writes that people in the ancient Near East believed that many if not all dreams came as communications from external sources—gods sent pleasant dreams as well as warnings and judgments; demons sent nightmares.[18] Dreams in the ancient Near Eastern were thus seen as functioning to impart knowledge or convey divine sanction (or divine punishment).[19] Dreaming as a form of divine communication was so significant that even regular, everyday-type dreams, “in all their fantastic variety,” were collected and catalogued into what we now call “dream books.” [20] Evidence for this practice exists from ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Ugarit, and the Hittite empire. As was the case in other forms of divination (attempts to know the future),[21] ancient Near Eastern scholars produced lists of these dream elements and their expected outcomes as a means to discern the fate of someone who received a similar divine communication in a similar dream.

Apart from dream catalogues, actual reports of individuals’ dreams in the ancient Near East occur in royal inscriptions, literary texts, and letters, as well as in myths and epics. These dream reports were produced using the standard literary conventions of their time and culture to express in writing the content of the dream.[25] Although the available textual evidence of dream accounts from the Semitic peoples living in Syria and Canaan is much sparser, these reports and interpretations show evidence of early Mesopotamian influences.[26] For some time now, scholars have classified these written ancient Near Eastern dream reports as representing either message or symbolic dreams.[27]

A well-known biblical example of a message dream is the one Solomon received at Gibeon, narrated in 1 Kings 3:5–15. Shortly after securing the throne in Jerusalem, Solomon “went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place” (v. 4; he had not yet built

the temple in Jerusalem[30]). While there, “the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee” (v. 5). Solomon requested wisdom and “an understanding heart” (v. 9). Jehovah promised to grant him this, as well as “riches, and honour” (v. 13). This dream portrays a divine being conveying a message to the dreamer. There is seemingly no symbolic imagery requiring interpretation.

A symbolic dream, on the other hand, is one in which the dreamer sees visual images that convey a message about the future, but the symbolism in the dream requires interpretation after awakening. Reports of symbolic dreams are typically followed by an interpretation announced by someone other than the dreamer. For example, the Mesopotamian epic hero Gilgamesh dreamed that “there were stars in the sky for me. And (something) like a sky-bolt of Anu kept falling upon me! I tried to lift it up, but it was too heavy for me.” After awakening, he related this and the rest of his dream to his mother. She provided an interpretation of its symbolism.[31]

Genesis 41 contains a biblical example of a symbolic dream report in which the Egyptian Pharaoh dreamed he saw seven thin cows eating seven fat cows and then seven scrawny tassels of grain consuming seven plump tassels (see vv. 1–8). Joseph announced the same interpretation for these parallel dreams: seven years of plenty in Egypt would be followed by seven years of famine (see vv. 14–32).

Ancient Near Eastern dream reports regularly display various types of linguistic and literary wordplay[33] Words, and even the forms in which they were written, were considered by the ancients to be “vehicles of power.” Thus, wordplay in dream reports and their interpretations were thought to “limit that power by restricting the parameters of a dream’s interpretation. 34] thus avoiding potential future calamity.

One scholar has rightly observed that, “while the process of dreaming certainly appears to be universal, the process of interpreting dreams is not, . . . the exegetical approach to dreams appears to be thoroughly grounded in, and determined by, the specific cultural and ontological frameworks of the interpreter.”[35] Thus, ancient Near Eastern peoples sought legitimate, accurate, limiting interpretations of their symbol-laden dreams in order to determine the will of the gods and to avert danger.[36] To forget one’s dream could be perilous, because without a correctly remembered dream one could not obtain the appropriate dream interpretation. Without an authentic interpretation, one could not prepare for or attempt to alter one’s fate, if need be.[37] This is illustrated by the anxiety of the imprisoned Egyptian officials who said to Joseph, “We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it” (Genesis 40:8).[38]

The Old Testament indicates that revelatory dreams were received by such well-known individuals as Jacob (see Genesis 28:12; 31:10–11), Joseph (see Genesis 37:5–10), Solomon (see 1 Kings 3:5–15), Job (see Job 7:14), and Daniel (see Daniel 7:1).[41] Accounts of dreams received by non-Israelites include the dreams of two Egyptian officials (see Genesis 40:5–8), an Egyptian

Pharaoh (see Genesis 41), a Midianite soldier (see Judges 7:13–15), and Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (see Daniel 2; 4). These dreams functioned to relay divine approval and important knowledge of the future.[42]

As with other ancient Near Eastern dream literature, the Bible preserves reports of what are commonly labeled message dreams (such as Solomon's in 1 Kings 3) and symbolic dreams (such as Pharaoh's in Genesis 41). And as noted above, some dream reports (such as Jacob's in Genesis 28) do not fit so neatly into this general schema.

The biblical narrative make it clear that Jehovah utilized dreams, whether they involved spoken instructions or more enigmatic symbolism, as one legitimate means of communicating with ancient Israelites. This was in addition to other accepted modes of revelation such as visions, divine appearances, prophecy, the Urim and Thummim, and casting lots.[50] For example, Jehovah instructed Aaron and Miriam that "if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Numbers 12:6). Additionally, Elihu reminded Job that "God speaketh . . . in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men. . . . Then he openeth the ears of [speaks to] men, and sealeth their instruction" (Job 33:14–16). And on the night before his death, when a desperate Saul "enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (1 Samuel 28:6)—all these modes of revelation are presented as legitimate but unavailable to Saul.

Notes

[1] Jeffrey R. Holland's statement about 1 Nephi 8 in *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 162, is often cited as support for this view: "At the very outset of the Book of Mormon, in its first fully developed allegory, Christ is portrayed as the source of eternal life and joy, the living evidence of divine love, and the means whereby God will fulfill his covenant with the house of Israel and indeed the entire family of man, returning them to all their eternal promises."

[2] Compare the similar dream revelations in Ether 9:3 ("the Lord warned Omer in a dream that he should depart out of the land") and Matthew 2:13 ("the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt;" see also Matthew 2:19–20).

[3] See, for example, George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955), 1:60–65; and Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 1:54–61. Kent P. Jackson, "The Tree of Life and the Ministry of Christ (1 Nephi 8–11, 15)," in vol. 7 of *Studies in Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 34–43, focuses primarily on 1 Nephi 11, saying little about chapter 8.

[4] Charles Swift, "Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: Understanding the Dream as Visionary Literature," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 52–63. See also the format of this chapter as understood by Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns*

(Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 12–15. James T. Duke, *The Literary Masterpiece Called the Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2004), 70–72, adds nothing new to the discussion.

[5] See, for example, Susan Easton Black, “Behold, I Have Dreamed a Dream,” in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988): 113–24, and Dennis L. Largey, “Lehi’s Dream,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 516–18.

[6] See, for example, Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, vol. 5, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 43–46; and more recently S. Kent Brown, “Lehi’s journey of, to the promised land,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 515, with further bibliography.

[7] See C. Wilfred Griggs, “The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book,” *BYU Studies* 22, no. 3 (1982): 259–78, especially 274–78.

[8] See S. Kent Brown’s discussion of this in “Lehi, book of,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 511.

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[13] A number of Latter-day Saint authors have commented on this Hebraic feature in the Book of Mormon. See, for example, M. Deloy Pack, “Hebraisms,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 322–23; and John Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 80–81.

[14] See McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary*, 56, who, writing in reference to Lehi’s dream, state that they “will draw upon Nephi’s account of the same vision (given in its entirety in 1 Nephi 11–14).”

[15] See, for example, the observations in Steven L. Olsen, “Prophecy and History: Structuring the Abridgment of the Nephite Records,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 24–25, on the content and stylistic nature of Lehi’s dream, which he describes as “an allegorical representation of salvation,” and Nephi’s vision, which he describes as “a literal representation of the plan of salvation . . . [representing] God’s redemptive work as it unfolds in real-world spatial, temporal, and human contexts.” Contrast Duke, *Literary Masterpiece*, 70, who claims, incorrectly in my view, that “the Dream of Lehi, and Nephi’s interpretation of that dream, is another wonderful example of an allegory (1 Nephi 8–15).” On the content of the dream and vision, see also John W. Welch, “Connections between the Visions of Lehi and Nephi,” in John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 49–53. Welch, while pointing out the many connecting similarities between Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s vision, observes that, “the two visions are very different in character. Lehi’s dream is intimate, symbolic, and salvific; Nephi’s vision is collective, historic, and eschatological” (49). Welch also states that, “Nephi’s vision is not a mere rerun of the Lehi’s. The second clearly develops each element of the first, from different perspectives and for different purposes” (52).

....

[18] See, for example, Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 237; and Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams and Dream Rituals*, 14–15, 23, 73. Butler and Oppenheim write as if they accept that ancient Near Eastern peoples thought all dreams came from external sources. However, Ottosson,

“halom,” in *Theological Dictionary*, 4:424, claims that “certain dreams were considered to derive not from divine revelation but from the psychological state of the dreamer.” Commenting on the religious orientation of dreams in ancient texts, Kelly Bulkeley, *Dreaming in the World’s Religions: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 3–4, makes the interesting observation that “dreaming has always been regarded as a religious phenomenon. Throughout history, in cultures worldwide, people have seen their dreams first and foremost as religiously meaningful experiences. . . . As a matter of historical fact, . . . dreams have played a powerful, complex, and dynamic role in the world’s religious and spiritual traditions.”

[19] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 35.

[20] Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, trans. Jill M. Munro (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 18. See also Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*, 19, 97–101. Dream omens are much better attested from Mesopotamia than from Egypt. The remains of only one poorly preserved text represent a so-called dream book from Ugarit. See, for example, Dennis Pardee, “Ugaritic Dream Omens (1.93),” in *Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger (Boston: Brill, 2003), 1:293–94.

[21] Divination was the ritual practice of “divining” or attempting to learn the future by observing natural phenomena thought to contain clues as to what the gods had decreed. Mesopotamian diviners, for example, observed and catalogued such things as anomalies on the livers and other internal organs of sacrificial animals, irregular heavenly and meteorological manifestations, dreams, and the births of disfigured humans and animals. Such divinatory practices were forbidden according to the Israelite Mosaic law (see Deuteronomy 18:10; Isaiah 47:13).

...

[25] For example, Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 186–87, 206, observed that most ancient Near Eastern dream reports or narratives, not surprisingly, consist of two major aspects: (1) the setting of the dream, which information typically brackets or frames the dream report, and (2) the content of the dream. Also, the dreamer’s response to the dream is often included. Oppenheim is cited by Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 218–19, who concludes at the end of his book that Oppenheim’s observation was correct. Of course, genre and other factors impacted the use of stereotypical features in such reports.

[26] Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 73–74, provides a brief survey of the relevant texts from Ugarit and the first millennium Aramaic kingdoms. See also Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 107–112.

[27] See, for example, the discussion of these designations by Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 23–24, 99–100; and Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 6–8.

[30] Gibeon is about six miles northwest of Jerusalem. Second Chronicles 1:3–6 indicates that the Mosaic tabernacle was then in Gibeon, even though David had brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem.

[31] Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (New York: Oxford, 1989), 57–58. This text is found on tablet one of the Gilgamesh epic.

[32] For this reason Scott Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 274–76, designates any dreams that required interpretation as “enigmatic,” and he calls for a new and conceptually different terminology. See Oppenheim’s preliminary use of the term enigmatic in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 206.

[33] See Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 11–32, 89–91.

[34] Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 40; see also 45, 105–6. Additionally, Noegel observes that “similes and metaphors served ‘magicians’ long before they served poets” (90).

[35] Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 253.

[36] Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 29.

[37] See, for example, Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 46–50. His similar comments on Egyptian enigmatic dreams are found on pages 92–93.

[38] Due to space limitations and a lack of relevancy for studying 1 Nephi 8, I have included no comments on the ancient practice of incubation. Incubation involved sleeping at a temple or other sacred space, often in conjunction with other ritual activity, with the express intent of receiving a revelatory dream (all are reported to have been message dreams). For a summary of this practice throughout the ancient Near East, see Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 46–50, 69–71, 172–76. I have also not included specific comments on the interesting evidence regarding dreams and interpretations in the Mari texts. On this material, see Jack Sasson, “Mari Dreams,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* vol. 103 no. 1(1983): 283–93; and Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 83–86.

...

[41] In the New Testament, reports of dreams occur in relation to Joseph, husband of Mary (Matthew 1:20; 2:13, 19–22), the wise men (Matthew 2:12), and probably Paul (“a vision appeared to Paul in the night” Acts 16:9).

[42] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 53, notes that in the Bible “the [dream] function of healing is seriously attenuated,” in contrast to dreams in the general ancient Near East.

[Dana M. Pike, “Lehi Dreamed a Dream: The Report of Lehi’s Dream in Its Biblical Context” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision: The 40th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, pp 92-102]

1 Nephi 8:2 **I Have Dreamed a Dream (Potter):**

When living in the Valley of Lemuel, Lehi "dreamed a dream" (1 Nephi 8:2) which became known as the dream of the Tree of Life (1 Nephi 8). Lehi's dream is filled with powerful images and forceful doctrine.

George Potter and Richard Wellington note that Nibley suggested that the elements of Lehi's dream scenery were made up of the images that surrounded him: "That is natural enough, for men to dream by night of the things they see by day--that is what makes Lehi's dream so convincing as authentic testimony."ⁱⁱⁱ He explains:

Long ago Sigmund Freud showed that dreams are symbolic, that they take their familiar materials from everyday life and use them to express the dreamer's real thought and desires . . . the peculiar materials of which Lehi's dreams are made, the images, situations, and dream-scenery which though typical come from the desert world in which Lehi was wandering."ⁱⁱⁱ

The more time we considered the wadi Tayyib al-Isim the stronger the impression came to our minds that the location Lehi was describing in his dream was composed of many of the objects that surrounded him in the valley. Not only were most of the elements of the dream present in the valley, but they also occurred in the dream in the same order that one would encounter them walking down wadi Tayyib al-Isim.

Before we consider the individual elements of Lehi's dream it is best for us to briefly run over its contents as found in 1 Nephi chapter 8. It contained a number of images: Lehi dreams he sees a man dressed in a white robe who bids Lehi to follow him. They travel for many hours in a dark and dreary wilderness. Lehi prays for the Lord's mercy and immediately he sees a great and spacious field and then a tree with sweet, white fruit which is desirable to make one happy. He sees a river near the tree, with the head a little way off. A rod of iron runs along the bank of the river together with a straight and narrow path. Lehi sees a numberless concourse of people, many of whom are pressing forward to obtain the fruit but are lost in a mist of darkness. Others cling to the iron rod and find their way to the tree. A great and spacious building is filled with well-dressed people mocking those who seek the fruit, who as a result become ashamed and are lost. A third group pressed forward to the building and is lost in the depths of the fountain. Those who are partaking of the fruit pay no heed to those who mock them. Laman and Lemuel do not eat of the fruit. These elements are worth examination in the real-life setting of Wadi Tayyib al-Isim.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 55-56, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 8:2 My Father (Lehi) Spake unto Us Saying . . . I Have Seen a Vision:

In an article about Lehi's vision, Alan Parrish explains that in the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ -is introduced in the twin visions of the Tree of Life given to the book's leading characters, Lehi and Nephi. Following these visions, they taught their families about the life and ministry of Christ. . . . The two accounts extend over sixteen of the fifty-two pages of 1 Nephi (31 percent). [Alan Parrish, "Stela 5, Izapa: A Layman's Consideration of the Tree of Life Stone," in First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation, p. 125]

This Tree of Life symbolism is extremely important for its doctrinal aspects (over 16 different references throughout the book). It is also the subject of a geographical and cultural correlation in Mesoamerica. Some years ago a monument was unearthed at the ancient ruins

of Izapa, located on the Pacific coast between Mexico and Guatemala. Of the over 80 monuments, or stelas, in the area, this monument was to become the most prominent. Since Izapa was an important religious center between 600 B.C. and A.D. 400 (Book of Mormon years), there was added significance to the fact that on the face of this 15-ton stone was represented a very complex and detailed portrayal of what appeared to be a Tree of Life scene.

In 1951, Dr. Wells Jakeman, the chairman of the Archaeology Department at B.Y.U., proposed that this monument (Stela 5) was a representation of Lehi's dream. Jakeman theorized that if people wanted to portray Lehi's account of the Tree of Life, with its many persons and movements, in complex interrelationship, they would have encountered some real problems, especially if attempting to portray it on stone. How would their artists have gone about it? The best method, probably, would have been for them to select a point in that account when most of the features were stationary; i.e., not the vision itself in actual progress, but the occasion of its telling by Lehi to his family. In a publication entitled Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas Mexico, A Major Archaeological Discovery of the New World, Jakeman thoroughly analyzed the stone, basing his approach on a quote of Dr. Alfred L. Kroeber, a leading authority on anthropological theory and method, which states: "a complex device used in two or more parts of the world suggests a connection between them in very proportion to its complexity. A combination of two or even three elements might conceivably have been repeated independently, [but] a combination of five or ten parts serving an identical purpose in an identical manner must necessarily appear as impossible of having been hit upon more than once. One thinks almost under compulsion, in such a case, of historical connection" (pp. 76-77).

Jakeman identified 114 points of agreement in the 23 correspondences between the Stela 5 scene and the culture from which Lehi would have come from according to the Book of Mormon account.

In 1958, Wells Jakeman published a much more detailed reanalysis of the carving, along with a more extensive interpretation, entitled The Complex "Tree-Of-Life" Carving on Izapa Stela 5. While Jakeman's analysis was fascinating for its time, it lacked a more complete Mesoamerican perspective. However, because of its focus on links to the Near Eastern cultures of Lehi's time, it is worth reading.

Between 1961 and 1965, the New World Archaeological Foundation of Brigham Young University carried out large-scale excavations at the ruins of Izapa. Many additional sculptures came to light, which prompted the Mexican government to make the ruins an archaeological park, and the site is now conveniently accessible, from the nearby town of Tapachula, to tourists.

Between 1973 and 1976, Garth Norman added to the archaeological literature on Izapa an important interpretive study entitled Izapa Sculpture. It contains a 75-page chapter called "The Supernarrative Stela 5." With this work, and with subsequent research yet to be

published, Norman has brought a much more detailed Mesoamerican perspective to the symbolism surrounding Stela 5.

According to Joseph Allen (Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon, p. 118), to this day, many consider Stela 5 to be the most significant discovery in relationship to the Book of Mormon.

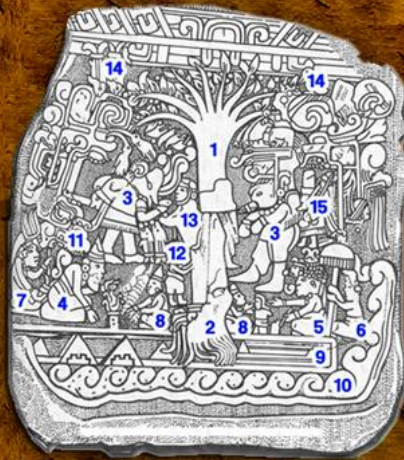


1 Nephi 8:2 I have seen a vision (Illustration): Features of the Izapa Tree-of-Life Scene. Drawing reproduction by the writer. For a brief correlation of some of the more important figures: (1) Lehi with the jawbone nameglyph, (2) Sariah with a symbolic headdress, (3) Nephi writing on a book with a stylus, (4) Sam holding an umbrella (11) over the figure of Nephi as a symbol of rulership, (5) Laman with his back to the tree of life and with smoke from the altar blinding him, (6) Lemuel with his back to the tree of life, (14) the rod of iron leading to the tree of life, (15) the Tree of Life with its white fruit, (17 & 18) Angels or cherubim guarding the tree, (19) the heavens, (23) filthy water with the head a little way off. [Wells Jakeman, Stela 5, Izapa, plate 5]



Stela 5 Tree of Life

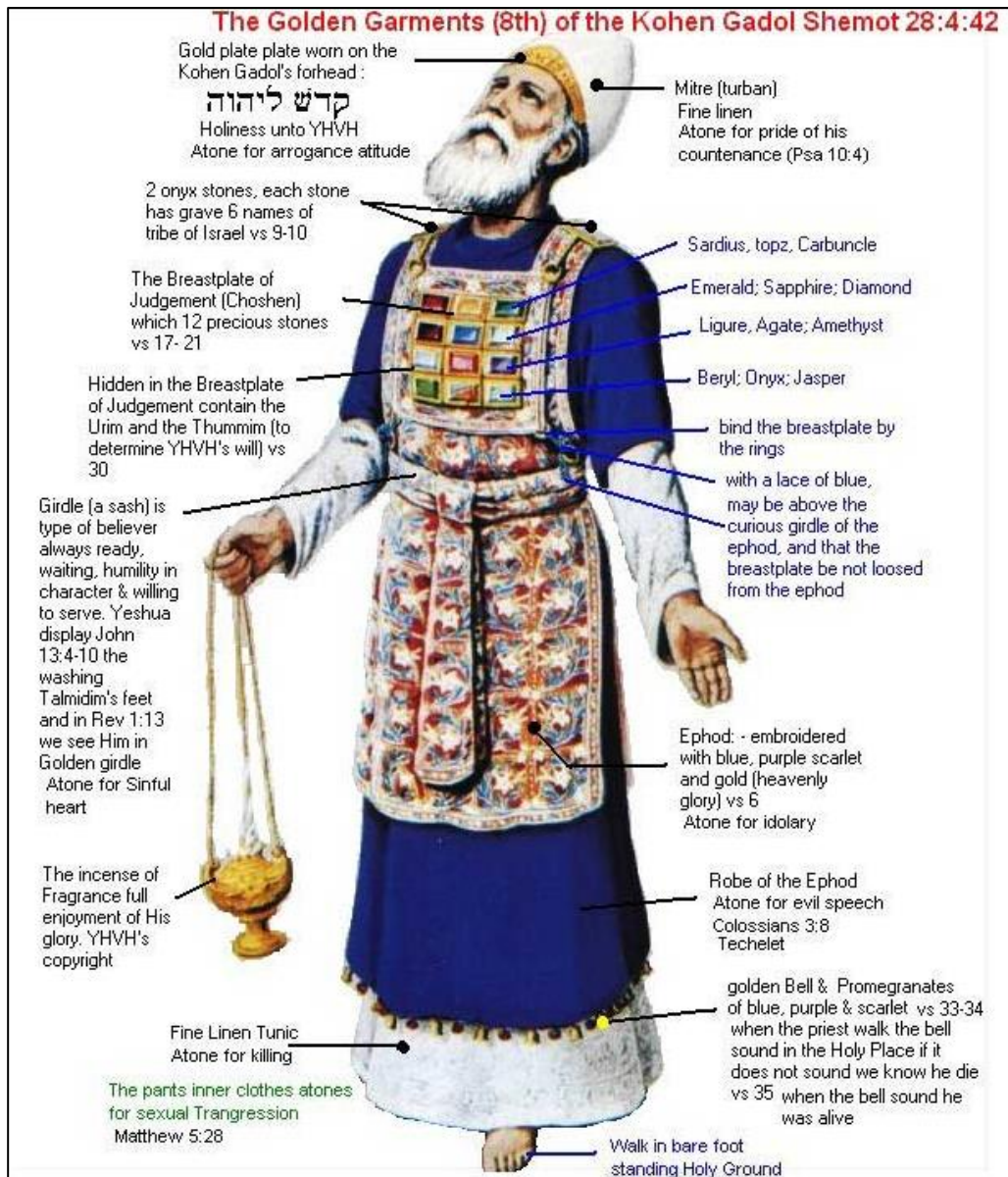
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1. The Tree of Life with much fruit
2. 12 roots representing the 12 tribes from Egypt
3. Cheribums guarding the tree of life
4. An elder (bearded?) giving instruction (Lehi)
5. Man of great stature, speaking stylus in hand (Nephi) Spirit speaking through him?
6. Man in supportive role (Sam)
7. Old female with royal headdress (Sariah)
8. Two men with their backs to the tree representing rejection, one blinded by smoke (Laman/Lemuel)
9. Rod of Iron
10. The filthy waters - depths of hell
11. Jawbone held over Lehi spokesman for the Lord
12. Groping in mist of darkness, hand touching tree
13. Partaking of fruit, but turning away from tree
14. Several birds and fish - eternal life
15. Laughing person - in building in the air



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1 Nephi 8:2 **My father [Lehi] spake to us (Illustration):** In Stela 5, the reader should note the hat which the character corresponding to Lehi wears. This hat which he wears is very uncommon to the general forms of headwear seen in the remnants of Mesoamerican antiquity. While we must concede that a hat like this can easily resemble caps worn in various cultures around the world, it is also quite similar to the standard *mitre* worn by Israelite priests, which I illustrate with the following 19th century engravings, based on factual data concerning the dress modes and religion of ancient Israel: ---Consecration of Aaron According to Israelite Custom--- [Ammon O'Brien, Seeing beyond Today with Ancient America, p. 183]

1 Nephi 8:2 I Have Seen a Vision (Stela 5--Chiastic Structure):

According to Joseph Allen, the chiastic style of prophetic writing found in the Bible is also found in the Book of Mormon. What is interesting is that it also appears in Maya writings and engravings (see illustrations: example 4,5). Although the chiasmus pattern is more immediately visible in picture form than in writing, it is easily apparent when the key words are placed in a picture-like structure. [Joseph L. Allen, "Hebrew Chiasmus," in Book of Mormon Archaeological Digest, Vol. 1/1, Spring 1998, p. 3]



A = Sariah

B = Lehi

C = Angel

D = Laman

D = Lemuel with their backs to the Tree

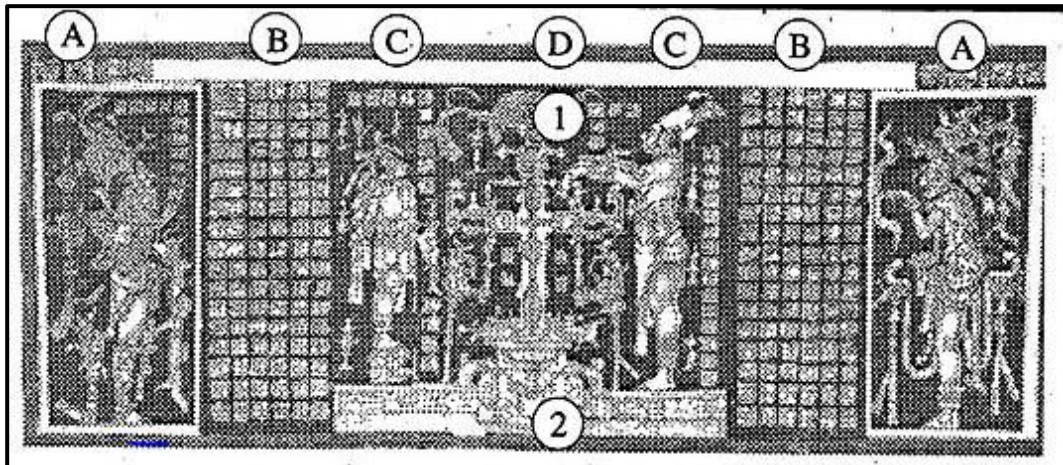
E = Tree of Life (Christ)

A = Sam in supporting positions

B = Nephi in prominent positions

C = Angel guarding the Tree of Life

1 Nephi 8:2 I have seen a vision (Stela 5--Chiastic Structure): Example 5: The Tree of Life Stone at Izapa (Stela 5) [Joseph L. Allen, "Hebrew Chiasmus," in Book of Mormon Archaeological Digest, Vol. 1/1, Spring 1998, p. 3]



The Tablet of the Cross Palenque

The classic period (200 AD to 800 AD) of the Maya also shows hieroglyphics written in the same chiastic style as the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The 7th century AD Temple of the Cross at Palenque illustrates this style on a panel which tells of the kingship transferring from Pacal to his son, Chan Balaam.

(A) The two outside panels represent the genealogy or ancestral lineage of both Chan Balaam and Pacal

(B) The next two opposing panels provide us with historical information about the king's birth, anointing to the kingship, and royal lineage.

(C) The two central figures are Pacal, who is shorter because he is now dead, and Chan Balaam, the new king.

(D) The central figure is The Tree of Life or stylized cross

The central theme is manifested by this cross with:

- (1) the Quetzal "sky bird" on the skyward part of the panel ; and
- (2) the Coatl "serpent" on the lower side.

1 Nephi 8:2 **I have seen a vision (Maya Tree of Life Chiastic Structure):** Example 4: The Tablet of the Cross [Joseph L. Allen, "Hebrew Chiasmus," in Book of Mormon Archaeological Digest, Vol. 1/1, Spring 1998, p. 3]

1 Nephi 8:2 **My Father [Lehi] Spake unto Us:**

According to the analysis of Stela 5 by Wells Jakeman (*Stela 5, Izapa*), one of the seated figures on the left of the tree clearly represents an old man (the long full beard and hunched back), who seems to be saying something about the tree to the other persons seated nearby, just as we should expect ancient Nephite artists to have portrayed the prophet Lehi of the Book of Mormon. (p. 14)

The long, full beard (much heavier than expected) worn by this man strongly suggests that he as well as the other persons represent people of the *Caucasoid* race (p. 16).

He has a repousse nose, and wears long ear-pendants and a high pointed turban or mitre. This high pointed turban or mitre resembles the high pointed turban or mitre worn by ancient Judean Israelite priests (and to a lesser degree that worn by the Assyrian kings), even appearing to be draped with folds of cloth parted in front, just as the ancient Near Eastern mitres (pp. 16,17)

Obviously the principal person in the event here depicted, he sits apparently cross-legged oriental-fashion, on a cushion. . . . Facing the tree, he is evidently saying something concerning it to the five other persons seated nearby. He was very probably a man of special religious learning, since the tree he is evidently speaking about is the Tree of Life, one of the most sacred religious symbols of ancient America (p. 16).

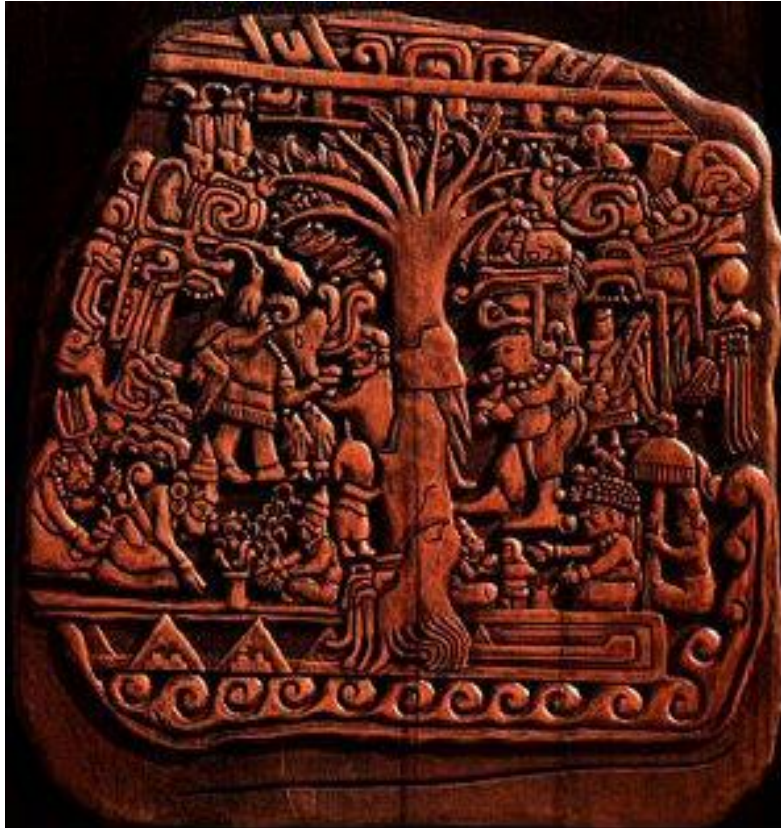
He seems also to be of priestly authority, since he appears to be making while he speaks, a burnt offering upon an altar. We should note here that Lehi and his people are identified in the Book of Mormon as ancient Israelites of the Near East, a ceremonious people who frequently made burnt offerings upon altars; in fact small, portable, incense altars called "tables of offerings," somewhat like the altar shown here, were especially common in Israelite families at the time of Lehi (p. 17).

He seems to have an emblem of some kind held above him. This strongly indicates that it is a hieroglyph recording his name. Now this emblem--apparently a name-glyph--is unquestionably the *cipactli* or 'crocodile' symbol of ancient Mesoamerican hieroglyphics (p. 18). It was employed as a hieroglyph for the name of a certain old man of ancient times called by the Aztecs *Cipactonal*, who was held by them to have invented the calendar, with the help of his wife (p. 19). This old couple of ancient Mesoamerican tradition--the "great father" and "great mother" were reported to have been the ancestors of the ancient inhabitants of the Guatemala Quiche region after "the flood," i.e. the old man "Cipactonal" or "Ixpiyacoc" and old woman "Oxomoco" or "Ixmucane" (pp. 23-24).

The *cipactli* glyph here is not only the general name glyph, "Cipactonal," but more specifically a glyph recording the personal name of this particular old man "Cipactonal"--symbolically, by depicting its meaning--as the Book of Mormon name Lehi. For the meaning of the name Lehi is the jaws--especially the upper jaw--in side view, i.e. "cheek." The *cipactli* glyph, held above the old bearded man, mainly depicts a pair of huge jaws (those of the crocodile)--especially the upper jaw--in side view, i.e. a great cheek! That is, this glyph is essentially a portrayal of what the name Lehi means. It therefore constitutes-- whether intended or not--a symbolic recording of that name (pp. 32-33).

According to Chiapan tradition, the twenty named days of the Sacred Almanac were so named by this "Cipactonal" and his associates in "Nachan" after twenty ancient "lords" the first of whom was "Imox" (or "Imix," i.e. "Cipactonal"), evidently the ancestor of the ancient peoples of Chiapas; i.e., the name of this ancestor and first lord was adopted as the name of the first day

of the religious calendar which day became known as Imox (Imix)[Mayan] or Cipactli, "Crocodile," [Nahuatl or Aztec](p. 34). A confirmation of this reconstruction is found in the fact that the name Mox (pronounced Mosh, the letter x in Mayan orthography having the sound of English *sh* given the first lord or ancestor of the ancient peoples of northern Central America in the Chiapan tradition, and the name Imox (Imosh) or Imix (Imish) given the *cipactli* or crocodile symbol of the first lord and also his calendar day in the Maya and Quiche Mayan languages, duplicate very closely in form and exactly in meaning the *Egyptian* word *msh*, "crocodile"! (pp. 16-33). [Wells Jakeman, *Stela 5, Izapa*, pp. 14-34]



1 Nephi 8:2 **I have seen a vision (Illustration):** Beautiful wood carving of Stela 5, a possible representation of the dream of the Tree of Life, discovered with 21 other stelae and 19 altars at Izapa in southern Mexico. In one of the earliest studies of *Stela 5*, an archaeologist, M. Wells Jakeman, found 22 correspondences and 114 points of agreement between the Izapa carving and the written accounts of Nephi and Lehi's Tree of Life visions. [Scot F. Proctor and Maurine J. Proctor, *Light from the Dust*, p. 31]

1 Nephi 8:4 **A Dark and Dreary Wilderness:**

Hugh Nibley explains that in his dreams Lehi finds himself wandering "in a dark and dreary waste," a "dark and dreary wilderness," where he must travel "for the space of many hours in darkness," lost and helpless (1 Nephi 8:4-8). Of all the images that haunt the early Arab poets this is by all odds the commonest; it is the standard nightmare of the Arab; and it is the

supreme boast of every poet that he has traveled long distances through dark and dreary wastes all alone. Invariably darkness is given as the main source of terror (the heat and glare of the day, though nearly always mentioned, are given second place), and the culminating horror is almost always a "mist of darkness," a depressing mixture of dust, and clammy fog, which, added to the night, completes the confusion of any who wander in the waste. [See 1 Nephi 8:23] [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 43]

1 Nephi 8:4 **A Dark and Dreary Wilderness (Potter):**

According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, 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. Hugh Nibley pointed out that,

Lehi's dreams have a very authentic undertone of anxiety of which the writer of 1 Nephi himself seems not fully aware; they are the dreams of a man heavily burdened with worries and responsibilities. The subjects of his unrest are two: the dangerous project he is undertaking, and the constant opposition and misbehavior of some of his people, especially his two eldest sons.^{iv}

Lehi's concern here in Wadi Tayyib al Ism is real. The valley is in an isolated wilderness and does not lie on any known routes. Lehi would have been going into an uncharted desert wasteland with only a finite supply of water. Most of the year the temperatures are extremely high and the lack of protection from the burning sun would have forced the family to make their journey at night. What better description of the terrain and conditions that the family traversed in the desert of Midian than a "dark and dreary waste." In the hot months one cannot survive more than two days without water. Without shelter from the sun the family would not last even that long. In what appears to be an act of desperation, Lehi prayed that the Lord "would have mercy on me" (1 Nephi 8:8). After he had prayed he beheld a large and spacious field. The presence of a field in the midst of the mountainous wilderness was a miraculous find, one which would have indicated to Lehi that the Lord was with the group and would provide for them. He was echoing the words of Isaiah, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land spring of water" (Isaiah 41:18). [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 56-57, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 8:4 **A dark and dreary wilderness (Potter) [Illustration]:** Lehi traveled for the space of many hours in a dark and dreary waste. Midian is one of the bleakest terrains in Arabia, known as Arabia Petrae to the Romans (Rocky Arabia). This picture is looking back from the oasis at the entrance to wadi Tayyib al-Isim. Quite a stark contrast. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 68-69, Unpublished]



1 Nephi 8:4 **A dark and dreary wilderness (Potter) [Illustration]:** A normally hardy acacia tree lies dead in the wadi. Wadi Tayyib al-Isim is barren for almost its entire length. By this point, just before the "spacious field" oasis, Lehi would doubtless have been very anxious for the welfare of his family. His dream mirrors this as he offers a prayer in desperation. [George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, p. 12, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 8:4 **I Saw in My Dream a Dark and Dreary Wilderness:**

Brant Gardner notes that John W. Welch has described a document from antiquity which has interesting structural and thematic parallels to Lehi's dream. Welch's article is entitled "The Narrative of Zosimus and the Book of Mormon" (FARMS publication).

The "Narrative of Zosimus" was originally written in Hebrew "and appears to be at least as old as the time of Christ, and perhaps much older" (Welch, *Zosimus*, p. 311). Points of correspondence are the righteous man entering a desolate area (Lehi in the wilderness, Zosimus in the desert) and imagery prominently involving a tree and a river. There is also the correspondence of a spiritual guide, which is more prominent in Zosimus than Lehi, but yet present in each.

A major structural difference which Welch does not point out is that while both trees (Lehi's and Zosimus') have fruit, the fruit is the critical element in Lehi's vision, and only a side reference in Zosimus. The function of the tree in Zosimus is to lift him to a different plane, which uses the function of the tree of life as a conduit, but is not part of the fruit imagery.

The interesting part of the Narrative of Zosimus is that it is an example of Tree of Life imagery from antiquity which does not fit the expected mold of Judaic mythological tradition. In that way, it serves as an excellent model for the Lehi dream, which also borrows some of the tradition, but differs in other ways.

[Brant Gardner, "Book of Mormon Commentary," 1Nephi/1Nephi8.htm, pp. 2-3]

1 Nephi 8:5 **White:**

Symbolism Which Can Help in Understanding the Scriptures

<u>Colors</u>	<u>Symbolism</u>
white	purity; righteousness; exaltation (Example: Revelation 3:4)
black	evil; famine; darkness (Example: Revelation 6:5)
red	sins; blood (Example Revelation 6:4; D&C 133:51)
blue	heaven; godliness
green	life; nature (Example: Revelation 8:7)
amber	sun; light
scarlet	royalty (Example: Daniel 5:29; Matthew 27:28-29)
silver	worth, but less than gold (Example Isaiah 48:10)
gold	the best; exaltation (Example: Revelation 4:4)

[David J. Ridges, The Book of Revelation Made Easier, preface]

1 Nephi 8:5-6 **I Saw a Man . . . Dressed in a White Robe . . . and [He] Bade Me Follow Him:**

In Lehi's dream he saw a man who was dressed in a white robe and who came and stood before Lehi. Lehi says, "he spake unto me, and bade me follow him." According to Hugh Nibley, this is a person who is going to be his guide. *Paralempator* is a classical word for the person who guides you through the ordinances of the temple. It is a man dressed in a white robe. [Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 171]

1 Nephi 8:7-33 **(Symbolism in Lehi's Dream):**

SYMBOL (What Lehi saw)

1. Large and spacious field (v.9)
2. Tree (v.10)
3. Fruit (v.10)
4. River of water (v.13)
5. Rod of iron (v.19)
6. Strait and narrow path (v.20)
7. Mist of Darkness (v.23)

(What Nephi additionally reported)

8. Great and spacious building
(1 Ne 11:36, 12:18)

9. Fountain of living waters (1 Ne 11:25)

10. Terrible gulf (1 Ne 12:18)

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

1 Nephi 8:8 **According to the Multitude of His Tender Mercies:**

The phrase "according to the multitude of his tender mercies" is a Hebraism meaning *according to his great mercy* (compare Psalms 5:7, "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy").

[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 16]

1 Nephi 8:9 **I Beheld a Large and Spacious Field (Potter):**

According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, since the tree which Lehi saw in his dream was the Tree of Life, we can conclude that the "large and spacious field" (1 Nephi 8:9) was a representation of the Garden of Eden. Corbin T. Volluz has outlined some similarities between the large and spacious field in the dream and the Garden of Eden. His comments are interesting in light of the fact that our proposed site for the "large and spacious field" in the upper valley of wadi Tayyib al-Isim has only one entrance and that is on the east end.

Abraham informs us that the tree of life was in the midst of the garden (Abraham 5:9; see also Revelation 2:7). Yet, when God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden he placed Cherubim with the flaming sword not in the midst of the garden, as one might expect, but "eastward in Eden" (Moses 4:312); Alma 12:21; 42:2; Genesis 3:24). . . . It is possible that the reason the Lord put the cherubim eastward in Eden to guard the tree of life which was located in the midst of the garden is because there was only one entrance to the garden and that entrance was located in the east.^v

Thus in Lehi's dream the large and spacious field which contains the tree of life is a spiritual representation of the Garden of Eden. The upper valley would seem to contain a number of attributes that would make it a possible candidate for a type of the Garden of Eden. It is a garden situated in a "lone and dreary world." It has only one entrance and that is on the

east end. It is fertile compared to the surroundings, seemingly "terrestrial" among the "telestial." It is enclosed by high mountains, making walls which would have given the impression of a self-contained, walled garden. It contains a river running through it. And it contains the palm tree, which is intimately associated with the Tree of Life, which represented the Son of God.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 59-60, Unpublished]



1 Nephi 8:9 **I beheld a large and spacious field (Potter) [Illustration]:** Entering the upper valley of Wadi Tayyib al-Isim from the east, its only entrance. [George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, p. 12, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 8:9 **I beheld a large and spacious field (Potter) [Illustration]:** After offering his prayer Lehi beheld a large and spacious field. Looking down wadi Tayyib al-Isim one can catch first site of the first of the palm groves in the distance. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 68-69, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 8:10 **A Tree Whose Fruit Was Desirable to Make One Happy :**

Jeffrey Bradshaw writes:

Ancient commentators often identify the symbolism of the Tree of Life with the olive tree. (n338) Its extremely long life makes it a fitting representation for eternal life, and

the everyday use of the oil as a source of both nourishment for man and fuel for light evokes natural associations when used in conjunction with the ritual anointing of priests and kings, and the blessing of the sick.(n339)

A variety of texts also associate the olive tree with the Garden of Eden. . . . Recalling the story of the dove that returned to Noah's ark with the olive branch in its mouth, one rabbinical opinion gives it that the "gates of the garden of Eden opened for the dove, and from there she brought it."(n341) Two days after a revelation describing how war was to be "poured out upon all nations," Joseph Smith designated D&C 88, by way of contrast, as the "olive leaf . . . plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord's message of peace to us."(n342)

The date palm, on the other hand, is the symbol of the sacred tree in Assyrian mythology, and its longevity was a fitting symbol for long life to the Egyptians.(n343) . . . The holiest places within the temples of Solomon and of Ezekiel's vision were decorated with palms.(n345) As a sign of victory and kingship, palm fronds were a central part of the celebration of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.(John 12:12; cf. Revelation 7:9,14) . . .

Also in favor of the date palm as a representation of the Tree of Life are the Book of Mormon accounts of the visions of Lehi and Nephi. Lehi contrasts the fruit of the Tree of Life to the fruit of the forbidden tree: "the one being sweet and the other bitter."(2 Nephi 2:15) The fruit of the date palm—often described as "white" in its most desirable varieties, well-known to Lehi's family, and likely available in the Valley of Lemuel where the family was camped at the time of the visions—would have provided a more fitting analogue than the olive ["fruit"] to the love of God that was "sweet above all that is sweet."(Alma 32:42)

Reconciling the competing conceptions of a Tree of Life that bears sweet fruit like the date as opposed to oil-producing fruit like the olive are ancient suggestions that the Garden story was concerned with three special trees rather than two.(n351) In addition to the original Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge, the third tree, an olive tree, is said to have sprouted up only after the sin of Adam. Thus, in a speculative mood, we might consider the possibility of two "Trees of Life": the original Edenic tree with its sweet fruit, destined as the ultimate reward of the righteous and arguably represented within the Holy of Holies of the First Temple,(n352) and the subsequently sprouted oil-bearing "Tree of Mercy" (351) that may have been symbolized in the menorah that is said to have stood in front of the veil in the Holy Place. In the parlance of the doctrines of the Restoration, we might see in this interpretation the oil-bearing olive tree as representing the Savior, His healing atonement, and the Gospel covenants explained to Adam and Eve after the Fall that would eventually enable them to return to the presence of the Father and the enjoyment of the sweet fruit of eternal life. (n354)

[Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Temple Themes in the Book of Moses, pp. 65-67]

1 Nephi 8:10 A Tree Whose Fruit Was Desirable to Make One Happy (Potter):

According to Dr. Abdul Hameed Al Hashash the palm has been the symbol of the tree of life in Arabia since ancient times.^{vi} In the Qur'an it is written "And tall (and stately) palm-trees, with shoots of fruit-stalks, piled one over another as sustenance for God's servants; We give (new) life therewith to land that is dead: Thus will be the resurrection." (Qur'an 50:10) In the Middle East the idea that the palm was symbolic of life is illustrated by the fact that the disciples chose palm leaves to spread before the Savior on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem as he was about to conclude his mission to conquer death.

It is easy to see why the date palm should be a symbol the Lord would use to represent to Lehi both the Savior and the Tree of Life. The fruit of the palm can be sweet and light, the date--the "true seed"--becomes a "tree of life) springing up into everlasting life" (Alma 32:41). "The longevity of the Bedouins is often attributed to the nutritional benefits of dates."^{vii} Palm leaves are also a symbol of victory.

The everlasting nature of the palm tree is signified by the fact that it never loses its leaves, its roots placed deep in the aquifer draw from the waters of "everlasting life." Arab lore says that the ideal environment for date palms is "with their feet in the water and their heads in the fires of the heavens."

[George Potter with Richard Wellington, Following the Words of Nephi: Part One: Discovering the Valley of Lemuel, Unpublished Manuscript, 1999, p. 91] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 11:7]



Saudi Arabia date palm

thenational.ae

1 Nephi 8:10 I Beheld a Tree, Whose Fruit Was Desirable to Make One Happy:

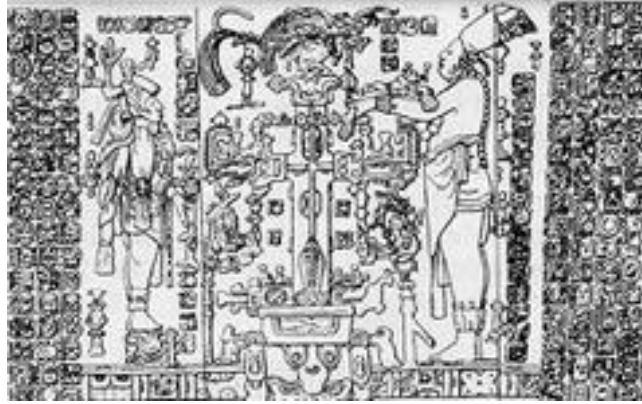
According to the analysis of Stela 5 by Wells Jakeman (*Stela 5, Izapa*), references to a "Tree of Life" symbol in the religion of the ancient civilized peoples of Mesoamerica have been known not only in the early Indian and Spanish writings of that area, but also in the religious arts of those peoples. The art representations show a fruit-bearing tree (fig. #15) . . . in the center, conventionalized into the form of a cross. Unlike the later versions from Mesoamerica, the Tree of Life is shown naturalistically, as a fruit-bearing tree, more like the Near Eastern representations than the cruciform. (pp. 5-6)

There is a bird perched on top (depicted, in some Maya examples, as a quetzal-bird with a serpent's head, therefore undoubtedly a symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the famed Life God of ancient Mesoamerica (p. 1). . . This bird seen perched atop the tree in the Mesoamerican portrayals also presents a rather close correspondence to the winged sun-disk above the Assyrian tree, since not only is it winged and placed above the tree, but in the Maya examples of Mesoamerica there can be seen a sun-symbol hanging from the quetzal bird's tail feathers (p. 3).

According to Jakeman, the representation of . . . cherubim was a practice of the ancestors of the Lehite people in Palestine, and was doubtless carried on by them, at least to some extent, in the New World. For example, sphinxes among the ivory plaques found in the ruins of Ahab's palace at Samaria were a prototype of the cherubim depicted in later Assyrian portrayals of the Tree of Life, and were frequently also represented in the Temple at Jerusalem (p. 12).

The two guardian personages (figs. #17 and #18, identified as the two largest figures seen standing facing the tree) are depicted on [Stela 5] much more like the two guardian personages seen in the Near Eastern portrayals than those seen in the other American representations: They are not only standing facing the tree on either side in an attitude of worship, like the Near Eastern--particularly the Assyrian--personages or cherubim, but they each seem to be *bird-headed*, as often likewise the Assyrian cherubim! . . . Observe that these Izapa figures have the same stance as the Assyrian cherubim: face more or less in profile, shoulders in full front or three-quarters view, but the legs and feet again in profile and in tandem, one advanced before the other. But the specific similarities do not end here. It will be noted that the personage on the right of the tree also appears to hold a tasseled baglike object with each hand, while the one on the left holds a pointed object raised towards the tree. In the Assyrian representations of the Tree of Life the guardian personages are usually also shown as holding a baglike object and a pointed object raised towards the tree. These bags might be bags for the fruit of the Tree of Life (pp. 6, 12).

[Wells Jakeman, *Stela 5, Izapa*, pp. 1-12]

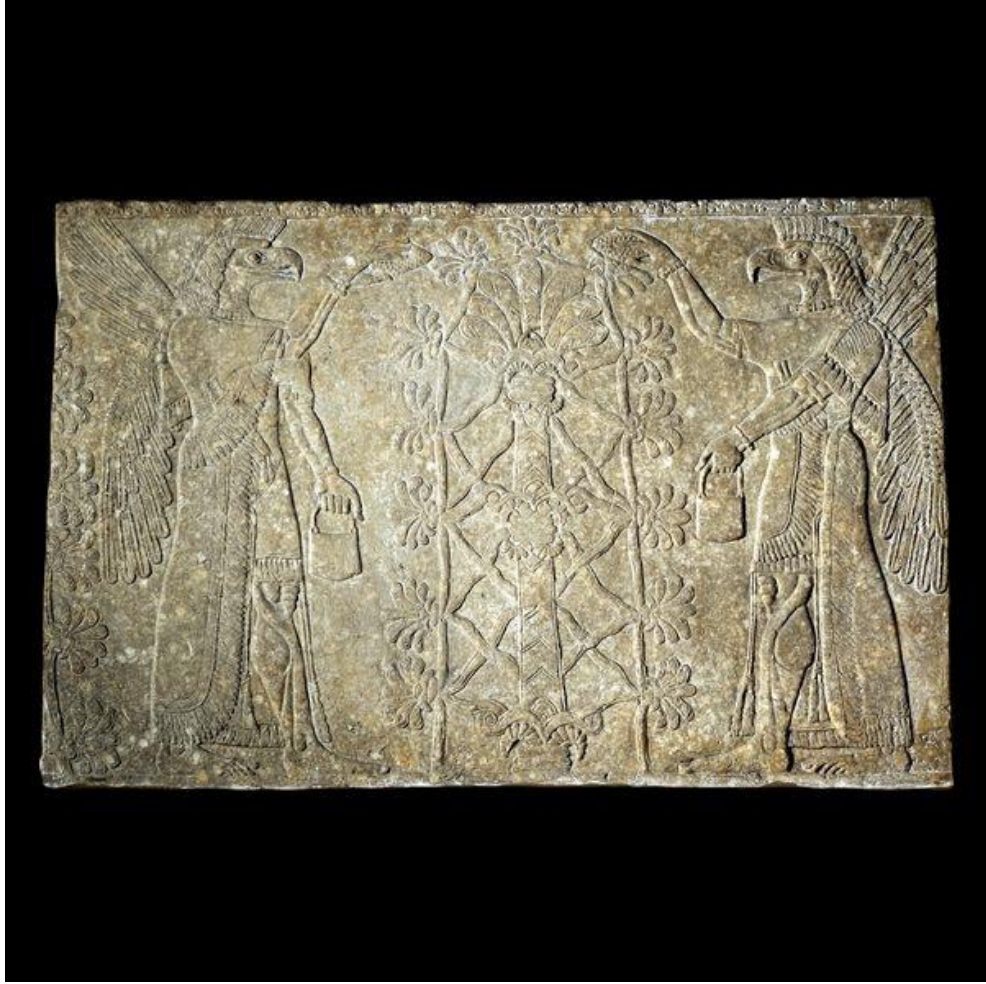


1 Nephi 8:10 **Tree of Life (Illustration)**: Ancient Representations of the Tree of Life. From a Maya monument (the so-called Tablet of the Cross, Palenque) in the National Museum of Archaeology, Mexico; [Wells Jakeman, [Stela 5, Izapa](#), pp. 3, 7]



Pinterest.com

1 Nephi 8:10 **Tree of Life (Illustration)**: Ancient Representations of the Tree of Life. From an Assyrian monument in the British Museum. [Wells Jakeman, [Stela 5, Izapa](#), pp. 3, 7]



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1 Nephi 8:10 **Tree of Life (Illustration):** Ancient Representations of the Tree of Life. From an Assyrian monument in the British Museum. [Wells Jakeman, [Stela 5, Izapa](#), p. 3,7]

1 Nephi 8:10 **I Beheld a Tree, Whose Fruit Was Desirable to Make One Happy:**

In 2010, Garth Norman, perhaps the world's expert on Izapa, published a book about Izapa. He is a Mormon who did the original New World Archaeological Foundation studies on Izapa begun in 1961 and published from 1962-1980. He has continued to study Izapa through 40 years of continued research. In language intended for universal readership, he writes the following about Izapa and Stela 5:

Around 1500 B.C., early settlers on the Pacific coast of Southern Mesoamerica approached the two highest mountains in Central America, Tacana' and Tajumulco, in what is today the rich southern Soconusco district of the state of Chiapas, Mexico.



Tacana

Tajumulco

[flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/14811170@N00/10248111111/)

Rivers, mountains and astronomy led them there. The first building at Izapa was a small ceremonial platform oriented to these mountain peaks. The settlers could observe the Summer Solstice and the planet Venus rising over Tajumulco. Venus in its northern cycle appears to rise dramatically out of the cauldron of the volcano to signify creation.

For 1000 years the early Olmec people occupied Izapa. The new culture that sprang up afterward blended the culture of the sedentary Olmec survivors still living in the region and preserved some of the old Olmec beliefs.

Olmec remains at Izapa are sparse, but what we do see is significant. Dominant themes come straight out of the Olmec heartland of the Gulf Coast of Mexico and tie to Olmec sculpture at Takalik Abaj in southwestern Guatemala.



Olmec Heartland in relation to Izapa and Takalik Abaj

[pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)

Olmec monuments at Izapa date to around 800 B.C.

Stela 67 at Izapa celebrates the rebirth of a new nation when the first Cakchiquel Maya ancestors arrived “from the west, from across the sea.”



Stela 67

edj.net

The bearded man in a boat on Stela 67, supported by umbilical cords, is sandwiched between an upside down boat over his head with symbols for emergence from the sea underworld (or from across the sea).

In about 400 B.C. people came to Izapa bringing a dynamic new cultural influence. They build a massive temple complex that spanned a square kilometer and included 10 plazas and more than 140 stone sculptures. Carved in a unique narrative style, the monuments (stelae) recount the origin of the ancestors and the universal journey of human life from the heavens to earth and back.

Design plans for the temple used geometry, standard measure, astronomy and topography. At the center of it all stood a massive pyramid oriented to the zenith-day sunrise. The entire complex functioned as a “temple to the sun,” although it is much much more.

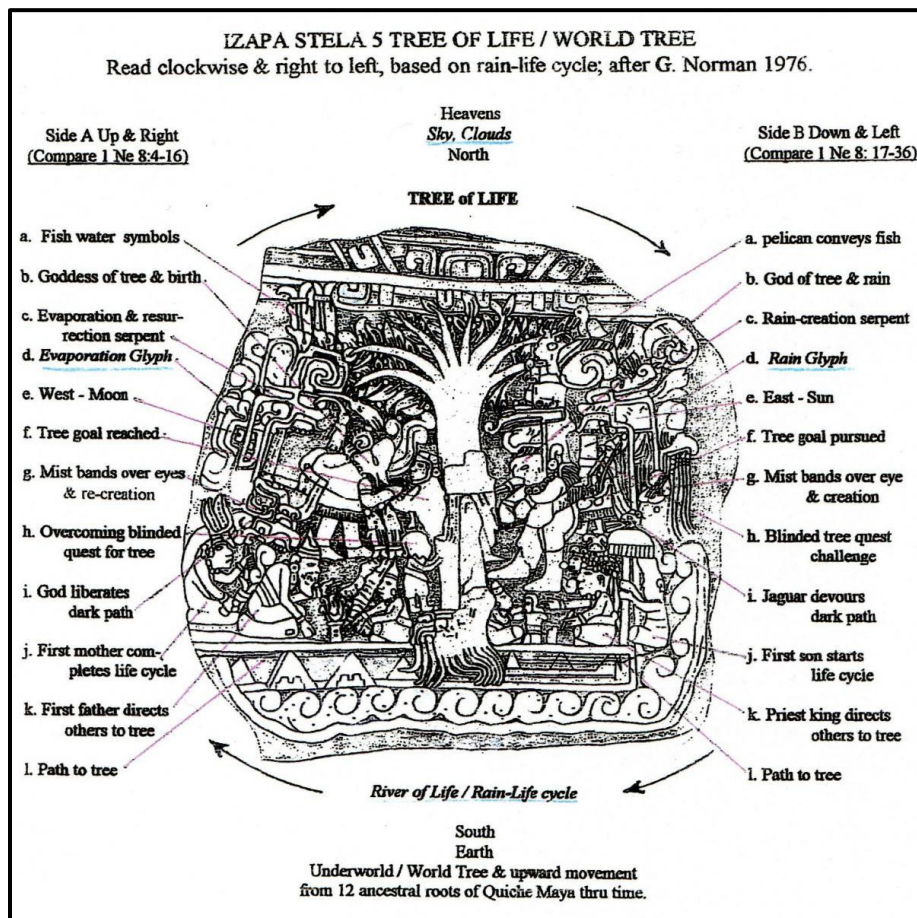
Izapa’s heyday waned in 100 A.D. when the religious focus shifted to a new, smaller temple . . . but the old temple survived as a heritage center.

For 1500 years Izapa's high civilization and pilgrimage center continued to influence peoples across the Mesoamerican landscape and beyond.

Izapa lies on the west bank of the Rio Suchiate at 14.8° N latitude. Early sky watchers chose this location and latitude to measure their sacred 260-day calendar that started with the sun's zenith passage on August 13 and went to the December 21 Winter Solstice and back on April 30. Here the Maya calendar began by fixing the mythic world creation on this August 13 Zenith date in 3114 B.C.

The Izapa calendar lays the foundation for creation of the Maya Calendar. The calendar map is represented by a counter-clockwise sequence of the monuments through the three months of the four seasons, starting in the west with Autumn. The calendar then moves south to Winter, east to Spring, north to Summer and ends in Fall-west again where it began.

Of special interest to Latter-day Saints is Stela 5 termed "The Tree of Life" or "World Tree."



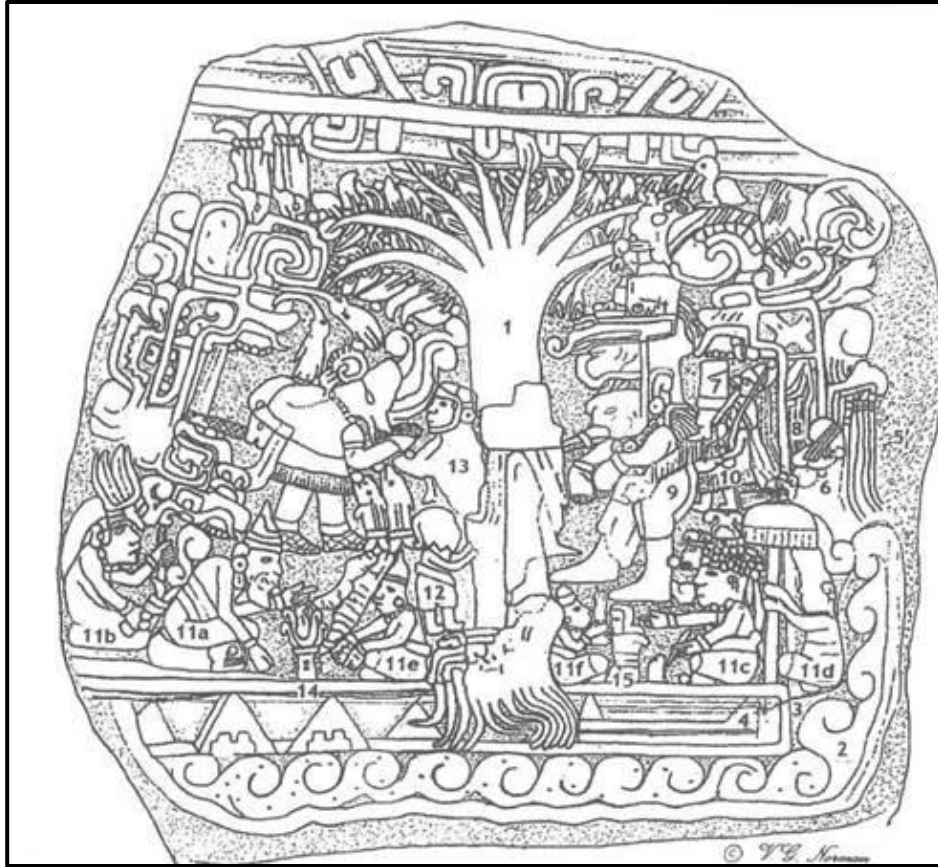
Stela 5

The calendar cycle reading of Stela 5 employed the rain cycle that surrounds the scene symbolizing the human life cycle; i.e., mankind's spirit comes from the heavens at the right with falling rain, travels physically through life like a river, then the spirit ascends back to heaven like the clouds of evaporation from the western sea. The great Tree of Life / World Tree also represents the journey of humanity from creation in the roots through earth life with branches reaching the heavens in the sky panel. Great sky serpents at the sides form the boundaries of the earth where supernatural powers guide the movement between heaven and earth. The family seated beneath the tree recalls the first ancestral family of the Maya *Popol Vuh* migration account. Their voyage serves as a prototype for the journey to reach the Tree of Life as individuals and as families, led by the two creator gods above. Father God stands in the air at the right leading a family to the tree. Mother Goddess stands at the left administering fruit from the Tree of Life to the person who has reached the spiritual end of life's journey by symbolically ascending up the World Tree trunk.

The Stela 5 tree trunk spans 6500 years of Mesoamerican World Ages history encompassing the 5200-year Calendar Round and the shorter Maya Long Count from 3114 B.C. to 2012 A.D. Stela 5 records this as a major change and growth time on the tree into the next new era presided over by Quetzalcoatl ("the raised serpent bird") standing at the right of the tree. According to Nahuatl historic tradition, Quetzalcoatl promised to return. (Cortez was mistaken for Quetzalcoatl). This parallels other traditions including the Christian teaching of the return of Jesus Christ after 2000 A.D.

Izapa may be the most important archaeological site for revealing the origins of Mesoamerican civilization.

[Garth Norman, [Izapa: Ancient Temple Center](#), 2010]



Stela 5 Izapa

ancientamerica.org

1 Nephi 8:10,11 Fruit [Which] Was Desirable to Make One Happy . . . White, to Exceed All (Potter):

When Lehi describes the tree he pays particular attention to the fruit of the tree which "was desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10) and "was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I have ever seen" (1 Nephi 8:11).

According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, the tree Lehi describes could well be the date palm, which grows throughout the Arabian Peninsula. It is easy to see why Lehi described it as "a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy." Here was the answer to his prayers, food for his family. Lehi received this dream in Arabia, where the "tree of life" is the date palm. In the Near East the date palm was a mainstay of survival.

There are a number of varieties of date palm. The color of the dates varies from the red

khunayzi to the yellow *khulask*. The color and taste of the *khulas* is of interest since it is "considered one of the best commercial varieties of date in the world. It is a great favorite . . . especially in the *rutub* stage when it is pale yellow, touched with amber and filled with sweetness."^{viii} The Arabs prefer to eat the dates when they are still yellow. In the west we never see the dates like this. When harvested for export the dates are left until they reach the *Tamr* stage, where they are all brown. The higher the temperature at which the fruit matures the more sweet it is. This is why the best dates in the world come from Saudi Arabia, where the summer temperatures do not drop below 90° F., even at night. Lehi would have been able to eat fresh pale dates which grew at higher temperatures than he would find in the Holy Land. It is not surprising then that Lehi states: "I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted" (1 Nephi 8:12). [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 57-58, Unpublished] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 11:7]

1 Nephi 8:10,11 **Fruit [which] was desirable to make one happy . . . white, to exceed all (Potter)**
[Illustration]: In the field Lehi saw a tree with sweet, white fruit. The Palm tree, the tree of life of the Middle East is a type of this tree. The white dates were sweet and life giving, bringing joy to the hungry travelers. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 68-69, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 8:13 **A River of Water (Potter):**

In Lehi's dream he beholds "a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit" (1 Nephi 8:13). One should note that the river here is described as being both near a tree and having its head a little way off. It would therefore seem to be a life-giving stream which starts in a valley and does not flow into the valley from some other distant location. Nephi later tells us that this "fountain of living water" was "a representation of the love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25). According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, in the wadi Tayyib al-Isim, moving from the upper valley of the Waters of Moses to the canyon proper and about 200 yards into the canyon, a spring emerges and feeds a small river near some date palms. This stream runs toward and finally empties into the Gulf of Aqaba at the canyon's end. Commenting on Nephi's description of the river, Hugh Nibley writes:

This is the authentic scenery of a desert oasis, with its rivers springing miraculously from nowhere and emptying themselves again perhaps into the desert sands. The expression "river of water" is used only for small, local streams, and here Lehi is so near the source of the little stream that he can recognize people standing there.^{ix}

Thus, this real-life scenario of the river of water in wadi Tayyib al-Isim matches the symbols of Lehi's dream quite adequately. It is easy to see why the river represents "the love of God" (see 1 Nephi 11:25). Together with the date palms, it was essential to the survival of Lehi's

family and its very existence in the middle of the wilderness and the fact that the family had been divinely led to it must have indicated to Lehi the love and concern the Lord had for them. But more than this, the river seems to be a representation of the Savior himself. The phrase "living water" (1 Nephi 11:25) is the same terminology the Lord used to describe himself in both the Old Testament (Jeremiah 2:13) and the New Testament (John 4:10).

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, p. 60]

1 Nephi 8:14 **I Saw the Head Thereof a Little Way Off:**

The word "head" is a literal translation of the Hebrew word *rosh*; one meaning is "the main division of a river or principal stream" (compare Genesis 2:10, "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads").

[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 16]

1 Nephi 8:14 **I Saw the Head Thereof a Little Way Off:**

According to Hugh Nibley, for one to be able to see "the head thereof a little way off" is desert scenario. What is even more important, however, is that this desert scenario provides us with a typical case of a river of water coming out of nowhere in the desert [because of underground streams]. Of course, the inevitable tree is growing there; you always find that. And springs come out miraculously, aquifers, etc ["a fountain of living waters"]. Needless to say they are greatly appreciated because they save your life [that is the tree becomes a "tree of life"]. . . . That's the scene of the first psalm, isn't it? The righteous man "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalms 1:3).

The word *ra s* is the word for *spring* and *head* in Arabic. That's where the stream originates, so when Lehi says, "the head thereof," he is using the proper idiom to designate the head, the beginning of the spring.

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, p. 173,176] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 8:13]

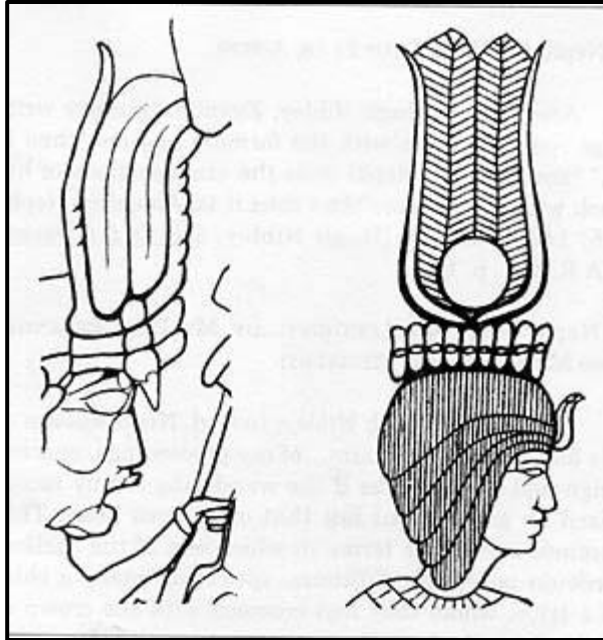
1 Nephi 8:14 **I Beheld Your Mother Sariah:**

According to the analysis of Stela 5 by Wells Jakeman, the position and role of the person (fig. #2) seated directly behind the old man corresponding to Lehi and in attendance upon him, are much what we might expect ancient artists among the descendants of Lehi to have given Sariah, in a portrayal of the Lehi Tree-of-Life episode.

It will be observed that this person has an old-appearing but beardless face. Note also that only this person (the old woman) and the old man, among the six figures are shown seated on cushions; which indicates that these two were the elder members of the group (p. 12).

This figure wears a headdress that is most unusual for known Mesoamerican art representations: a tall crown or tiara, consisting of two contiguous roll-or band-like elements at the base, probably encircling the head, and what appear to be two tall feathers (or leaves?) rising upward therefrom side by side, enclosed at the bottom and sides by a pair of long horns. We find that this crown or tiara closely duplicates a certain crown seen in ancient Egyptian representations . . . which identifies the wearer as a queen or princess (e.g., as seen worn by the young wife of King Tutankhamen, in the latter's tomb; and by the last Queen Cleopatra, in a carving on the temple at Denderah) (p. 36).

It is therefore of considerable significance when the Izapa carving is viewed in the light of the Book of Mormon account. It constitutes a Near Eastern-like motif in the carving . . . Secondly, it confirms the indications brought out earlier in this study that the person shown wearing this crown was a woman ("Oxomoco" or "Ixmucañe" of Mesoamerican tradition), as was the corresponding person of the Book of Mormon account, Sariah the wife of Lehi. Thirdly, its apparent identification of the person wearing it as not only a woman but a queen or princess is not improbably in further agreement with the Book of Mormon, since the corresponding person of that account, Sariah, may well have come to be regarded as a queen by the people of Lehi (having been the wife of Lehi, their first leader or ruler). Finally, its signification of "princess" closely agrees with the name of this corresponding person Sariah of the Book of Mormon account. For the meaning of the basic part of this person's name, Hebrew *sarah*, is also "princess"! (*Sariah*, "Princess of Yahweh"). In other words, this crown can be considered as actually a kind of name-glyph (derived from an Egyptian symbol, just as expected), giving the name of the person wearing it as the Book of Mormon name Sariah (p. 37). [Wells Jakeman, Stela 5, Izapa, pp. 12,18,36-37]



1 Nephi 8:14 **I beheld your mother Sariah (Illustration):** Horned-and-Feathered Crowns. Left: horned and feathered crown worn by figure 2 of the Izapa carving; right: the ancient Egyptian horned and feathered crown signifying 'queen' or 'princess' (an example of the crown worn by the young wife of King Tutankhamen, in a scene on the back of a throne found in the latter's tomb). [Wells Jakeman, Stela 5, Izapa, Plate 7]

1 Nephi 8:14 **I Beheld . . . Nephi:**

According to Wells Jakeman's analysis of the Stela 5 (Tree of Life) monument, there is a young man (fig. #3) seated in front of the old bearded man. (He is evidently young since he seems to have a small beard, and is probably of large stature and/or considerable importance, since he is shown larger than any of the other five; note especially the great size of his arms). He wears ear ornaments, and a complicated headdress with what seem to be leaves projecting backward and hanging down the back; and holds in his left hand a long pointed object, evidently a stylus or writing instrument, with which he appears to be recording what is being said about the tree. At the same time his right arm and hand are extended, in an apparent speaking gesture, towards one of the three other persons seated in front of the old man; while above him is held, by one of these other persons, what is quite clearly an umbrella or parasol (fig. #11). This person corresponds in character and role to Nephi of the Book of Mormon account.

In Mesoamerica, the umbrella--or "canopy"--held or placed above a seated ruler was regarded as a symbol of his rulership. Consequently, the more probable purpose was to indicate that the young man was not only the recorder of the discussion depicted here but also--surprisingly--a ruler (rather than the old priestly personage (Lehi) as might be expected) (p. 26). Incidentally, the umbrella was also a symbol of rulership in the ancient Near East as well as in eastern Asia, in the Old World (p. 27).

There is a rectangular object resting upon the ground panel in front of the large young man with the stylus. Its shape and position strongly indicate that it is a plate or tablet, upon which the young man is writing (p. 26). What we have here is the earliest discovered depiction in America of writing implements and the act of writing. In view of our dating of Stela 5 to the Late Preclassic period, this depiction also constitutes further archaeological evidence that hieroglyphic writing was in use in Mesoamerica in preclassic times (in addition to a growing body of actual hieroglyphic inscriptions dating from those times) (p. 34, 1958).

[Wells Jakeman, Stela 5, Izapa, pp. 25-27, 34]

1 Nephi 8:14 **I Beheld . . . Sam:**

As discussed earlier, there is a figure not only in front of the old man, but behind and in attendance on the young man with the stylus. He appears to wear an oriental-like turban; and seems to be holding what is clearly an umbrella or parasol above the young man's head probably to identify him as a ruler. This person holding the umbrella corresponds somewhat to Sam (p. 28). In the Book of Mormon account, Sam is indicated to have supported Nephi in his rulership of the colony and kept the commandments of God. When Lehi blessed Sam, his blessing was connected with Nephi's blessing:

"(Lehi) spake unto Sam, saying: Blessed art thou, and thy seed; for thou shalt inherit the land like unto thy brother Nephi. And thy seed shall be numbered with his seed; and thou shalt be even like unto thy brother, and thy seed like unto his seed; and thou shalt be blessed in all thy days (2 Nephi 4:11).

[Wells Jakeman, Stela 5, Izapa, p. 28]

1 Nephi 8:17,18 **Laman and Lemuel Would Not Partake of the Fruit:**

According to the analysis of Stela 5 by Wells Jakeman, two of the four persons seated in front of the old man have their backs to the Tree of Life. The first (fig. #5) is seated directly in front of the old man (the logical position of the eldest son in such an episode as that recorded in the Book of Mormon. He wears a high pointed turban that has a pendant neck cloth at the back, and is seated apparently cross-legged oriental-fashion with his mouth open and hands extended as though discussing something with the old man. One should observe that this person, as well as the other figure with his back to the tree (fig. #6), are the two smallest of the six seated persons; just as we might expect Nephite artists to portray Laman and Lemuel. The second person (fig. #6) also wears a turban like the first. These turbans closely resemble a type of turban or headdress often worn in the southwestern Asiatic homeland of the Book of Mormon peoples, in its having a pendant neck cloth at the back. [Wells Jakeman, Stela 5, Izapa, pp. 28-29]

1 Nephi 8:20 ***Strait and Narrow Path:***

The word "strait" has been recently restored from the Original and Printers Manuscripts. This restores the intended meaning of "narrow, limited, confining." The implication is that the path beside the rod of iron is wide enough for one person only. Thus, a person must have direct personal contact with the word of God [or their own personal testimony of the covenants of the Lord] in order to reach the tree of life.

[Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 17]

1 Nephi 8:20 **I Also Beheld a Strait and Narrow Path, Which Came along by the Rod of Iron:**

In his dream, Lehi beheld a "strait and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:20). Hugh Nibley asks the question, What is the rod of iron? Nibley remarks that there is a statement in the *Midrash* about this. The temple mountain in Jerusalem has been flattened off artificially to make a place for the Dome of the Rock that stands there today, the great mosque of the Moslems. Before then it was really quite steep where the temple was originally built in the time of David, and in the Jebusite city. The sacred way that went up to the temple was steep and narrow and went zigzag up the side. You can see this in Athens at the Acropolis. The sacred ways always go up that way. It was slippery and it was on the rock. When it would storm, you could fall off--with old, feeble people, etc. So there was a railing that went up, and you could follow it. It was iron, and it rusted away in time. It was replaced with a wooden railing. They had to cling to the iron rod to get up to the temple so they wouldn't slip and fall on the rocks.

Another example is at Adam's Mount in Ceylon, the most sacred place in the East. That's where Adam is supposed to have landed when he descended from the other world and came here. They show a footprint there, etc. From there he went wandering, and didn't find Eve until he got to Medina. But when he got to Mecca, he made an imitation of the original temple. The Angel Gabriel came and showed him how to build it out of sheets of light, etc. But here we have the sacred rod. There was originally a railing that went up, and it has been replaced by a brass chain that people pull themselves up by. . . . Sometimes it's a chain, sometimes a rope, sometimes a cable--anything they can get to make it and pull themselves up to the top. It's an *omphalos*. Every ancient temple, every ancient world shrine had an *omphalos*, which means an *umbilicus* [connecting cord] and the temple represented the center of the world--the birthplace of creation. . . . So the idea of holding to the rod and pulling yourself up is a very common one. And also the idea of a "strait and narrow path."

[Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, pp. 174-175]

1 Nephi 8:20 **A Strait and Narrow Path:**

Bruce R. McConkie writes:

“The course leading to eternal life is both strait and straight. It is straight because it has an invariable direction -- always it is the same. There are no diversions, crooked paths, or tangents leading to the kingdom of God. It is strait because it is narrow and restricted, a course where full obedience to the full law is required. Straightness has reference to direction, straitness to width. The gate is strait; the path is both strait and straight. (2 Ne. 9:41; 31:9, 17-18; 33:9; Alma 37:44-45; Hela. 3:29-30; 3 Ne. 14:13-14; 27:33; D. & C. 22; 132:22; Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24; Heb. 12:13; Jer. 31:9.)

“Thus by entering in at the strait gate (which is repentance and baptism) a person gets on the ‘straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life.’ (2 Ne. 31:17-18.)”

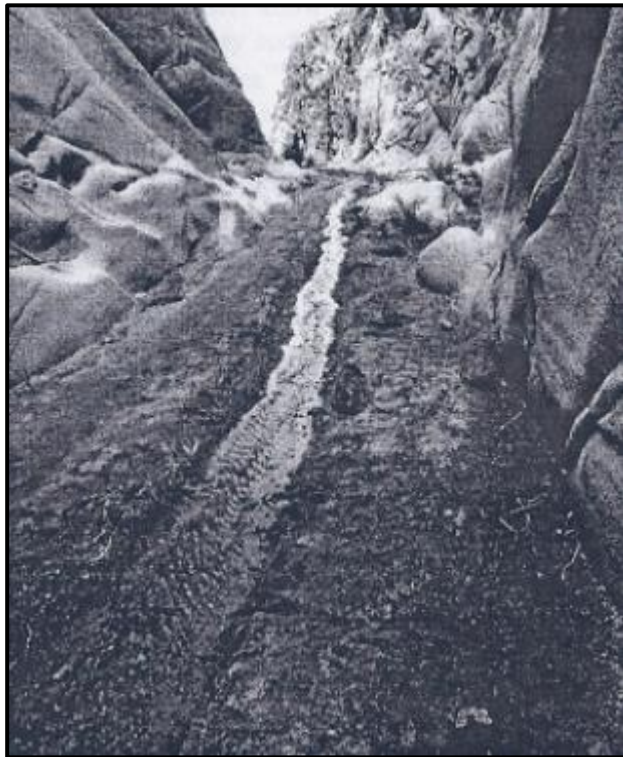
[Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 769]

1 Nephi 8:20 **A Strait and Narrow Path (Potter):**

George Potter and Richard Wellington note that in Lehi's dream, "a strait and narrow path" (1 Nephi 8:20) leads along by the rod of iron and extends along the bank of the river. It leads to the tree, the head of the fountain and the large field at one end and to the great and spacious building at the other.

One should note that the spelling of the word Nephi uses to describe the path is *strait*. This does not mean that the path runs in a *straight* line but rather a "narrow, limited, confined or confining" path.^x What better description could there be for the smooth natural gravel walkway that runs beside the river nearly four miles through the wadi Tayyib al-Isim canyon? The path is confined by the towering walls of the canyon which are seldom more than forty feet apart at the base, and there are no side canyons or exits. There are no side turns that can be taken, just one confined path that leads from the upper valley all the way to the Gulf of Aqaba.

Almost without exception the wadis in the land of Midian are wide and open and one is free to take any path one wishes. The narrow and confining nature of the canyon in wadi Tayyib al-Isim is unique, in our experience of traveling in Arabia, inasmuch as it is the only place we have explored where confining walls allow the traveler to walk along a narrow path and nowhere else. The Lord taught that "narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). Clearly the path too is a representation of Him: "Jesus saith . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). [George Potter & Richard Wellington, *Discovering Nephi's Trail*, Chapter 3, p. 17, Unpublished]



1 Nephi 8:20 **A strait and narrow path (Potter)** [Illustration]: Level footpath runs along the river the entire length of the canyon. [George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, p. 17, Unpublished]

1 Nephi 8:20 **The Rod of Iron (Potter):**

In Lehi's dream, the image of a rod of iron seems to be figurative since it is not something one would expect to see in a natural setting of a tree, a narrow path, and a river. But what would make Lehi think of such a thing? If a rod represents something that one might hold on to in order to keep oriented, and if iron is something hard and durable, then we might look for something natural that would represent such qualities. In wadi Tayyib al-Isim the granite walls of the canyon themselves may be the natural manifestation that inspired Lehi. Granite is one of the hardest rocks on earth and the solid walls of the canyon would contrast sharply with the soft sandstone walls of the rest of the wadi. If the purpose of the rod of iron was to lead those struggling through the mists of darkness to the tree of life, then these canyon walls serve the same purpose. Anyone wishing to find their way up or down the canyon in the dark need only place their hand on the wall and walk. This might explain why Lehi tells us that the multitudes were "feeling their way" (1 Nephi 8:31) or "*pressing forward*" (1 Nephi 8:24). The phrase "pressing forward" not only implies pressing on the walls, but it also implies large numbers of people moving forward in a confined space, such as the narrow canyon. It is

interesting that Nephi, in talking about the awful gulf (or gorge cut between the vertical canyon walls) which separated the righteous from the wicked was a result of the "word of . . . God" (1 Nephi 12:18). "The word of God" is also the meaning that Nephi gives to the symbolism of the rod (1 Nephi 11:25). The idea of a granite canyon wall inspiring the image of the rod of iron makes sense in the context of these two definitions.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 61-62]

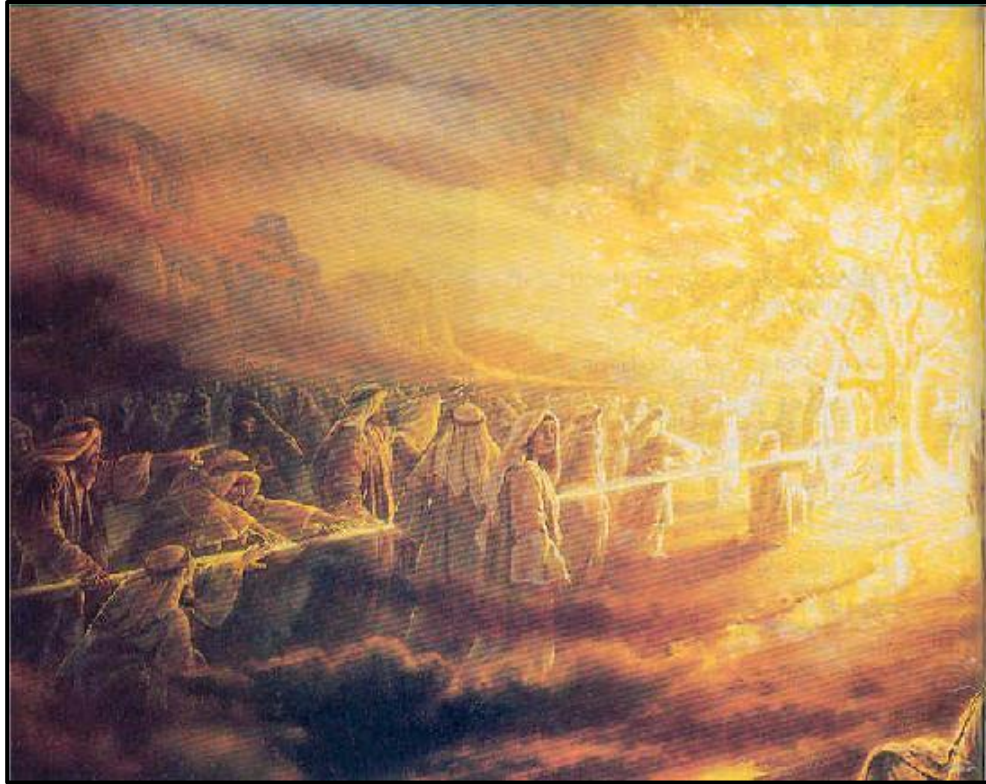
1 Nephi 8:23 **An Exceedingly Great Mist of Darkness (Potter):**

In Lehi's dream "there arose . . . an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way" (1 Nephi 8:23). According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, in wadi Tayyib al-Isim the lower end of the canyon opens onto the shore of the Gulf of Aqaba. They observed thick fog in the canyon which is caused by the cool air descending from the mountains mixing with the moist warm air circulating from the Red Sea. This would presumably have been a cause of concern for Lehi and Sariah as any young children could easily become lost in the mist. Under such conditions, the only way to find their way back up the canyon would have been to hold close to the granite cliff walls, using them as a guide "feeling their way" back to the upper canyon. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 62-63]

1 Nephi 8:23 **An exceedingly great mist of darkness (Potter) [Illustration]:** The sun sets over Egypt in the distance. The combination of warm water in the Red Sea and cool air from the mountains can make thick fogs, which only affect the coast, reminiscent of Lehi's mist of darkness which blinded people who were lost in the gulf. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 68-69, Unpublished]



1 Nephi 8:23 **A mist of darkness (Illustration):** The brightness of the afternoon sun is nearly obliterated during this sandstorm in the Arabian peninsula near the borders of the Red Sea. Driven by winds in excess of seventy miles an hour, sand particles cut with abrasive power any object or life form they touch. [Scot and Maurine Proctor, Light from the Dust, pp. 36-37]



1 Nephi 8:24 **I Beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron (Illustration):** The Rod of Iron and the Tree of Life. Artist: Greg Olsen [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Ensign, March 1995, p. 14]

1 Nephi 8:26 **A Great and Spacious Building:**

Hugh Nibley asserts that when Lehi dreams of the vanity of the world, he sees "a great and spacious building" (1 Nephi 8:26), suspended in the air out of reach and full of smart and finely dressed people. That is exactly how the Bedouin of the desert, to whom the great stone houses of the city are an abomination, pictures the wicked world; and as the city Arabs still mock their desert cousins (whom they secretly envy) with every show of open contempt, so the well-dressed people in the big house "were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers" (1 Nephi 8:7) at the poor little band of bedraggled wanderers, hungrily eating fruit from a tree, and duly abashed that their poverty should be put to open shame. One is reminded by Lehi's imagery of the great stone houses of the ancient Arabs, "ten-and twelve-story skyscrapers that . . . represent genuine survivals of ancient Babylonian architecture," with their windows beginning, for the sake of defense, fifty feet from the ground. At night these lighted windows would certainly give the effect of being suspended above the earth. [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 44]



1 Nephi 8:26 **A great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth** **(Illustration):** A great and spacious building in the days of Lehi may have been like the palace of Bilquis, the Queen of Sheba, with towers reaching to a great height and windows throughout. Located in Marib, Yemen, this palace was the crossroads of the ancient capital of Sheba, one of the wealthiest cities in Arabia in Lehi's time. [Scot and Maurine Proctor, Light from the Dust, pp. 24-25]

1 Nephi 8:26 **A Great and Spacious Building (Potter):**

In Lehi's dream he describes
a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.
And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their
manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and
pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit. (1
Nephi 8:26, 27)

According to George Potter and Richard Wellington, the scenery of wadi Tayyib al-Isim could have added much to Lehi's image of "a great and spacious building." If one continues down the canyon of wadi Tayyib al-Isim, the walls of the canyon continue to rise and reach over 2,000 feet in height. Obviously one cannot know what the building looked like that Lehi saw in his dream. In most pictures the building is normally represented as some type of skyscraper with its base above the ground, floating in the air. It has been suggested that this building recalls the multi-storied houses of Southern Arabia,^{xi} that the family might have encountered later in their journey.^{xii} This may well be the case, however some alternative perspectives might be worthwhile here.

At one point in the canyon, the rock walls form a gothic arch high overhead, appearing to almost overlap and block out the sky, reminiscent of the great Cathedral of Canterbury or the Abbey of Westminster, but on a much grander scale (see the illustration below). Here the natural acoustics allow very little chance for sound waves to dissipate and noises seem amplified. It is similar to the whispering gallery of St. Paul's Cathedral in London or the Tabernacle of Salt Lake City. It took 7 seconds for a loud shout to subside, indicating that the sound waves traveled between the walls of the canyon upwards of 200 times. If the members of Lehi's party mocked him in this location, could the amplified sound of such laughter and derision have played on Lehi's mind?

It is interesting to note that Nephi later mentions that the building falls (1 Nephi 11:36). This arching of the canyon walls is the only location where there are large rocks on the floor which have come crashing down from high above. [George Potter and Richard Wellington, Discovering the Lehi-Nephi Trail, pp. 63-64] [See the Potter commentary on 1 Nephi 12:18]



1 Nephi 8:26 **A great and spacious building (Potter) [Illustration]:** Canyon walls near opening, George standing in the lighted area of the canyon floor. [George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering Nephi's Trail, Chapter 3, p. 18, Unpublished]



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1 Nephi 8:27 **And they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit (Illustration):** Details of Lehi's Dream. Artist: Greg Olsen. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Ensign, March 1995, pp. 14, 12-13]

1 Nephi 8:31 Many Were Drowned in the Depths of the Fountain:

[See the commentary on 1 Nephi 12:16]

1 Nephi 8:32 Wandering in Strange Roads:

According to Hugh Nibley, when Lehi dreams of people gone astray, they are lost in a trackless waste, "wandering in strange roads" (1 Nephi 8:32) or blundering "into broad roads, that they perish and are lost" (1 Nephi 12:17) because of the "mist of darkness" (1 Nephi 8:23). Losing one's way is of course the fate that haunts every desert dweller sleeping and waking, and the Arab poets are full of the terror of "strange roads" and "broad ways." [Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 45-46]

1 Nephi 9:6 And Thus It Is, Amen:

Hugh Nibley explains that Egyptian literary writings regularly close with the formula *iw-f-pw* "thus it is," "and so it is." Nephi ends the main sections of his book with the phrase, "And thus it is, Amen" (1 Nephi 9:6; 14:30; 22:31).

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., p. 17]

1 Nephi 10 (Testimonies of Christ and the Covenant People):

Two short chapters, 9 & 10 of First Nephi, are very special chapters in that they not only detail the importance of a written record, but they mark the convergence of a number of important testimonies of Christ and His covenant with the house of Israel. Nephi puts Lehi's prophecy of the Messiah side-by-side with the prophet Isaiah's prophecy of John the Baptist's preparatory work relative to the Messiah. Nephi also ties Lehi's prophecy concerning the scattering and gathering of covenant Israel to Zenos' Olive tree prophecy.

In chapter 10 we find the center of Nephi's conceptual chiasmic outline for his whole book of First Nephi. Yet one should compare the wording of that conceptual center with Nephi's reasons for making his plates in chapter 9:

Chiasmic center: "For [God] is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him." (1 Nephi 10:18)

Reason for the plates: "The Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is amen." (1 Nephi 9:6)

Nephi ends chapters 9 & 10 by declaring that "the Holy Ghost giveth authority that [he] should speak these things, and deny them not" (1 Nephi 10:22).

As a final thought, it is noteworthy that chapters 9 & 10 not only lead into Nephi's vision concerning his seed, but that they follow Lehi's vision.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 1:2]

1 Nephi 10:1 **An Account . . . of My Proceedings, and My Reign and Ministry:**

Hugh Nibley asserts that indeed, Nephi speaks of his history as "an account . . . of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry" (1 Nephi 10:1) as if the wandering family recognized no government but that of its own head. This reminds one of the terms in which one of the earliest Bedouin poets, Ibn Kulthum, speaks of "many a chief of a tribe, whom they had crowned with the crown of authority and who protects those who seek refuge with him," as if every *sheikh* were truly a king.

[Hugh Nibley, Lehi in the Desert, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 67-68]

1 Nephi 10:1 **And Now I, Nephi, Proceed to Give an Account upon These Plates of My Proceedings, and My Reign and Ministry:**

Noel B. Reynolds has shown that Nephi's record in the book of First Nephi is composed of two parallel accounts. He calls the first part, found in chapters 1-9, "Lehi's account" because it is Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record, and the second, found in chapters 10-22, "Nephi's account" as here he makes his own record. Each of these individual records parallels the other in both structure and content while at the same time each one is a chiasm within itself.

According to Reynolds the central point around which the first chiasm turns is the obtaining of the brass plates. The central point of the second is the building of the boat.

[As noted by George Potter & Richard Wellington, Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail, Unpublished Manuscript (July 2000), pp. 261-262; see also Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline," in Book of Mormon Authorship, New Light on Ancient Origins], p. 53] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 1:20]

1 Nephi 10:1 **I, Nephi, Proceed to Give an Account upon These Plates of My Proceedings:**

In 1 Nephi 1:17, Nephi says (referring to his writings on the small plates), "I shall make

an account of my proceedings, in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life." 1 Nephi 10:1 contains a similar phrase "And now I, Nephi, proceed to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry." Some have supposed this later verse to be the place in the record that Nephi begins to make an account of his own proceedings (see Sperry, Compendium, p. 94). However, the "proceedings" of Nephi do not immediately follow. In fact, Nephi specifically states in verse 10:1 that "[in order] to proceed with mine account I must speak somewhat of the things of my father and also my brethren." Nephi doesn't fully get to himself until verse 17 of chapter 10.

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 1:2 (global chiasmic structure), 1 Nephi 10:18, and 1 Nephi 2:22]

1 Nephi 10:1 **I Must Speak Somewhat of the Things of My Father:**

In a very interesting textual note, Nephi tells the reader that in order to explain "my proceedings, and my reign and ministry" (1 Nephi 10:1), he must comment on the teachings of his father. He then gives a summary of Lehi's teachings. Why are these teachings so interesting? And why is Nephi's comment so interesting? Because according to Garold Davis, Nephi's summary of Lehi's teachings is a rather precise outline for all the commentaries on Isaiah that follow in the Book of Mormon. 1 Nephi 10 indicates that:

- (1) Jerusalem will be destroyed and the Jews will be carried away (v. 3);
- (2) the Jews will return and "possess again the land of their inheritance" (v. 3)
- (3) the Messiah will come and "take away the sins of the world," but he will be rejected and slain and will then "rise from the dead" (vv. 4-11);
- (4) the house of Israel will then be scattered "upon all the face of the earth" (vv. 12-13);
- (5) the gentiles will receive "the fulness of the Gospel," and then the house of Israel will be gathered together and "come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer" (v. 14).

[Garold N. Davis, "Pattern and Purpose of the Isaiah Commentaries in the Book of Mormon," in Davis Britton ed. Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 281-282] [See the commentary on Words of Mormon 1:5]

1 Nephi 10:3 **[The Jews] Should Return Again . . . and . . . Possess Again the Land of Their Inheritance:**

Lehi prophesied that the Jews would return to Jerusalem after they were conquered and taken away by the Babylonians. This is a well described event in the Old Testament. Jeremiah said, For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place (Jer 28:10).

The entire book of Nehemiah describes the return from Babylon to Jerusalem and the unusual penitent attitude of the Jews at the time. About this return Joseph McConkie and Robert Millet write the following:

“Lehi, like other Old Testament prophets, foretold the ultimate return of the Jews to Jerusalem. Almost a century and a half earlier, Isaiah had spoken prophetically of the coming of Cyrus the Persian, the man God would raise up among a heathen nation to allow the return and rebuilding of Jerusalem. In speaking of Cyrus, the Lord said: ‘He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.’ Indeed, the Lord called Cyrus his ‘anointed,’ and stressed that his ‘right hand I have holden.’ (Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1.) Jeremiah, speaking in behalf of Jehovah, explained: ‘And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon [the Persians would garner power], and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations’ (Jeremiah 25:12). Jeremiah also prophesied: ‘For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place’ (Jeremiah 29:10). Indeed, within seventy years Cyrus the Persian would issue a decree allowing the return and reconstruction of the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). (McConkie, Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, p. 64)

1 Nephi 10:4 Six Hundred Years from the Time That My Father [Lehi] Left Jerusalem, a Prophet Would the Lord God Raise Up among the Jews--Even a Messiah:

There are some questions that need to be answered regarding Nephi's account of his father Lehi's prophecies. Nephi asserts that, "six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews--even a Messiah" (1 Nephi 10:4). Joseph Allen introduces the dilemma:

The traditional Book of Mormon dating for Lehi's departure from Jerusalem is 600 B.C., the first year of the reign of King Zedekiah/Mattaniah. Modern Biblical scholarship, as outlined above, places the first year of the reign of King Zedekiah/Mattaniah at 597 or 598 B.C. The question is, did Lehi leave Jerusalem around 600 B.C., or 597 B.C., three years later?

The issue is further complicated because Biblical scholarship places the birth of Christ at 4 B.C. If we use the 600 B.C. Lehi departure date, the birth of Christ would need to be at 1B.C./A.D.1

If the first year of the reign of Zedekiah/Mattaniah was 597 B.C. and if Christ was born at 4 B.C., why does the Book of Mormon say that in 600 years the Savior would be born? If we subtract 4 B.C. from 597 B.C., we come up with 593 years instead of 600 years. [See Appendix A]

Option #1:

The years from 597 B.C. (the first year of the reign of Zedekiah/Mattaniah and the departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem) to 4 B.C. (the death of Herod and the birth of Christ) are 593 years (365.24 days to the year). But 597 B.C. to 4 B.C. is 600 Maya years (*tun*, or 360 days).

Therefore, Lehi left Jerusalem at 597 B.C., in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah/Mattaniah. Six hundred Maya years later, Christ was born, which is the year 4 B.C.

Nephi was writing his record in Mesoamerica. The Book of Mormon record keepers [might have] adopted the *tun* year.

The Mesoamericans adjusted their calendar in A.D. 6 when a mass planetary conjunction occurred. This adjustment is consistent with the Book of Mormon wherein it states that nine years after the birth of Christ (4 B.C.), the people adjusted their calendar system in the beginning of A.D. 6 or at the end of A.D. 5 (3 Nephi 2:7-8) . . . (thus) all is well. Or is it? [Joseph Allen, Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon, p. 22] [See Appendix A]

Option #2:

According to a F.A.R.M.S. article by Jay Huber, even before the days of Lehi, a 360-day year had historical precedence. Many of the ancient calendars had a 360-day core. The Egyptian standard civil calendar, dating from the early third millennium B.C. consisted of a core of 12 months of 30 days each, with five extra days tagged onto the end of the year. In Mesopotamia a similar schematic calendar was used, although it never became dominant as it did in Egypt, being overshadowed by the lunar calendar. It is even speculated that the pre-exilic Israelite calendar used a 360-day base.

[Jay Huber, "Lehi's 600-Year Prophecy and the Birth of Christ," F.A.R.M.S., p. 12]

The notion of a 360-day year has a number of interesting scriptural echoes. The apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, seems to equate 42 months with 3.5 "times" (or "years"; compare Rev. 12:14 with 12:6), as well as 42 months with 1260 days (Rev 11:2 and 3). Both usages seem to imply a 12 month "year" with 30 days per "month." Similarly the Genesis account of the flood implies the use of a thirty-day month in its equating the five "months" of the flood to 150 days (see Genesis 7:11-12, 24; 8:2-4) (p. 14).

In conclusion, only the 360-day year allows Lehi's 600-year prophecy to be fitted between Herod's death and Zedekiah's accession. Whether such a year length was fixed by

revelation, by Old World tradition, or by personal preference is uncertain (p. 34). [See Appendix A]

Option #3:

Joseph Allen suggests that before we get too excited about a 597 B.C. departure date for Lehi, let us take a look at what was going on in Jerusalem at 597 B.C., which suggests that Lehi and his family had been long gone from their homeland.

1. Jehoiakim, who had been the king of Judah for 11 years, was thrown against the wall by the Babylonians and denied a burial in 598/597 B.C. The reason the Babylonians took such drastic action is that Jehoiakim did not send the last month's rent as had been agreed in a treaty three years previously. The Babylonians simply foreclosed on Jehoiakim. They took 3,000 of the principal leaders of Judah captive into Babylon (Josephus 217).

With this type of turmoil going on at 597 B.C. in Jerusalem we would expect Nephi to mention it in his account as opposed to just prophesying about it (1 Nephi 2:11).

In addition, if what we read above happened in 597 B.C., the gold and silver and land would already have been confiscated by Nebuchadnezzar. Laman and Lemuel would probably be grumbling in Babylon.

2. In the same year, 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonians, placed the son of Jehoiakim, whose name was Jehoiachin, on the throne. However, fearful that the son might retaliate for his father's death, the Babylonians took Jehoiachin into captivity to Babylon after Jehoiachin had reigned for only three months and ten days.

The Babylonians carried away the king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and mighty men of the land. The Babylonians also took captive into Babylon all the craftsmen and smiths and the mighty men of valor, consisting of 10,000 captives. Only the poorest part of the people were left at Jerusalem. (2 Kings 24:14-18). In this way, Nebuchadnezzar was assured of getting his tribute and of keeping Jerusalem under control.

Had Lehi and his family still been around in 598/97 B.C. when the above activity was taking place in Jerusalem, he and his sons, as well as Laban who had the brass plates, would have been deported into Babylon. They would certainly qualify as "men of valor" and would not be considered "the poorest sort of the people" (2 Kings 24:14).

Nebuchadnezzar had been the king of the Babylonians for four years. During those four years, he had carried on a Napoleon-type program wherein he gained control over Egypt, Syria, and a good share of the Mid-Eastern world. In the year 601 B.C., he marched with a mighty army to Jerusalem. In no uncertain terms, he informed Jehoiakim, who had been the king for eight years, that Jehoiakim needed to sign a treaty and to pay a heavy tribute to Babylon or

Jerusalem would be destroyed on the spot. Jehoiakim complied with the request and paid tribute for three years, or until about 598/97 B.C. During the three years, the calm before the storm occurred. To the vain people, like Laman and Lemuel, peace was apparently guaranteed.

3. To extract 600 years [from a 601 B.C. departure date], we must place the birth of Christ at 1 B.C./A.D.1 [This] is not difficult to solve, as many scholars feel comfortable with a 1 B.C. birth date for Christ. (See the book April Sixth, by John Lefgren. See also the articles by John P. Pratt in *The Ensign*, 1985:59-68) [Joseph Allen, Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon, pp. 22-23] [See also John P. Pratt, "Lehi's 600-year Prophecy of the Birth of Christ, [Http://www.meridianmagazine.com/articles/000331sixhundred.html](http://www.meridianmagazine.com/articles/000331sixhundred.html)] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 1:13; 10:4] [See Appendix A]

Option #4:

According to Randall Spackman, if we follow the latest scholarly research, the first year of the reign of Zedekiah (and therefore the earliest time at which Lehi could have departed Jerusalem) was 597 B.C.E. This creates a problem: 600 years from 597 B.C.E. does not correlate with the time of the birth of Christ. The principal timekeeping system throughout the Middle East in the sixth century B.C.E. was a 12-moon calendar (which averages 354.36705 days per year). The priests also recognized that the solar year (365.2422 days) was about 11 days longer than the 12-moon calendar. In Lehi's days, a thirteenth moon was added (or "intercalated") to a year when it became clear that the religious festivals were starting to occur too early in the agricultural or seasonal cycle. However, it is unlikely that Lehi would have attempted to intercalate his calendar even for a short period of time because the methods used were secret and closely guarded by the priests of the temple. In the same way, the traditional calendar of the Arabian desert was a non-intercalated 12-moon calendar. In addition, with Lehi traveling through different climate zones, there would have been no constant seasonal frame of reference. Moreover, Lehi's descendants would have been in conformity with Mesoamerican astronomical and calendrical practice if they simply continued to count a 12-moon year. Thus, the 600 years of Lehi's prophecy appear to have been counted as 600 x 12, or 7,200 moons, a period of about 212,620.2 days or 582.13 of our solar years. As we shall find in future commentary, scholarly calculations place the birth of Christ around 5 B.C.E. If that is the case, then Lehi might have left Jerusalem almost right as the siege was lifted in January 587 B.C.E. [Randall Spackman, "Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology," F.A.R.M.S., pp. 15-17]

Option #5

According to John Tvedtnes, it is very doubtful that we can take the "600 years" of Nephi's prophecy as literal, since Lehi left Jerusalem no earlier than the first year of Zedekiah (1 Nephi 1:4), which would have been 598 B.C.--already too late for the prophecy to have been fulfilled precisely 600 years later. Thus, Alma (see Alma 3:14-17) could have been aware of Nephi's statement and taken it as an approximation only, rather than as a precise date. It is Mormon's rewriting of the history which has the birth of Christ occurring in the six hundredth year (3 Nephi 1:1). And it was this same Mormon who acknowledged that there could have

been errors in the chronology (3 Nephi 8:1-2).

[John A. Tvedtnes, "Book Review of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*," in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, FARMS, Vol. 3, 1991, p. 199]

1 Nephi 10:4-5 **A Messiah . . . a Savior . . . This Redeemer:**

Lehi prophesied that "a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews--even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the World. He also spoke of how many prophets had testified of this Messiah, this "Redeemer of the world" (1 Nephi 10:4-5)

As Christians we refer to Jesus as "the Christ." This comes from the Greek *Christus* meaning "the anointed one." *Christus* was the Greek translation of the Hebrew word also meaning "the anointed one." The Hebrew word is *Meshiach*, or *Messiah* as we have anglicized it. Therefore, it is proper that Lehi would refer to this prophet as "the Messiah," the Savior, or "the Redeemer" (1 Nephi 10:5).

[Church Educational System, Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121-122, 1981, p. 26]

1 Nephi 10:5 **And [Lehi] Also Spake concerning the Prophets . . . This Messiah . . . This Redeemer:**

According to Brant Gardner, perhaps as no other verse, 1 Nephi 10:5 indicates the quantity of material which has been excised from the report of Lehi's sermon: "And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world."

It is hard to imagine Lehi expounding on the great number of prophets which had predicated the coming of the Messiah without naming them, and probably citing their clearest prophecies. Nephi chooses not to repeat this information, and suffices himself with only the briefest of mentions. It is not clear from the available information how much of the plan of life Lehi expounded. Clearly he made explicit the connection of the Messiah to the Fall of Man (see 1 Nephi 10:6), but again Nephi only records this very brief synopsis of what must have been a much larger original text. [Brant Gardner, *Book of Mormon Commentary*, 1Nephi/1Nephi10.htm, p. 3]

1 Nephi 10:5 **[Lehi] Also Spake concerning the Prophets, How Great a Number Had Testified of . . . the Messiah:**

In the tenth chapter of his first book, Nephi makes the following statement:

For behold, it came to pass after my father had made an end of speaking the words of his dream, and also of exhorting [my brethren] to all diligence, he spake unto them concerning the Jews . . . after they should be brought back out of captivity they should possess again the land of their inheritance. Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews-- even a Messiah, or in other words, a Savior of the world. And he also spake concerning the prophets, *how great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah of whom he had spoken or this Redeemer of the world.* (1 Nephi 10:2-5)

This statement sounds strange in view of the fact that there are only two references to the term "Messiah" in the Old Testament, and both references are found in succeeding verses in the book of Daniel (Daniel 9:25-26). One might wonder just what happened to all these references. Were they part of the "plain and most precious things" which Nephi in vision would foresee to be taken out of the holy writ? (see 1 Nephi 13:26). In view of this paradox, I find it very interesting that Alfred Edersheim, one of the most noted commentators on the life and times of Jesus, makes the following comments:

Perhaps the most valuable element in Rabbinic commentation on Messianic times is that in which, as so frequently, it is explained, that all the miracles and deliverances of Israel's past, would be re-enacted, only in a much wider manner, in the days of the Messiah. Thus the whole past was symbolic, and typical of the future--the Old Testament the glass, through which the universal blessings of the latter days were seen. It is in this sense that we would understand the two sayings of the Talmud: "*All the prophets prophesied only of the days of the Messiah*" (Sanh. 99a) and "The world was created only for the Messiah." (Sanh. 98b).

In accordance with all this, the ancient Synagogue found references to the Messiah in many more passages of the Old Testament than those verbal predictions, to which we generally appeal; and the latter formed (as in the New Testament) a proportionately small, and secondary, element in the conception of the Messianic era. This is fully borne out by a detailed analysis of those passages in the Old Testament to which the ancient Synagogue referred as Messianic. [Note* Edersheim refers the reader to Appendix IX, where a detailed list is given of all the Old Testament passages which the ancient Synagogue applied Messianically, together with the references to the Rabbinic works where they are quoted] Their number amounts to upwards of 456 (75 from the Pentateuch, 243 from the Prophets, and 138 from the Hagiographa), and their Messianic application is supported by more than 558 references to the most ancient Rabbinic writings. But comparatively few of these are what would be termed verbal predictions. Rather would it seem as if every event were regarded as prophetic, and every prophecy, whether by fact, or by word (prediction), as a light to cast its sheen on the future, until the picture of the Messianic age in the far back-ground stood out in the hundredfold variegated brightness of prophetic events,, and prophetic utterances. (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Part 1. Grand Rapids, Wm.

B. Eerdmans, 1971, pp. 162-163)

If the term and concept of "the Messiah" had to be salvaged in Rabbinic writings, which were written commentaries based on oral traditions dating back to after the fall of Jerusalem (and to the Dispersion of which Daniel was a part), then the taking out of many "plain and most precious" parts of the holy writ could have already occurred at the time Lehi was called as a prophet to warn the people of the destruction that was waiting for them if they did not repent. It is interesting that when Lehi prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of their wickedness they only mocked him, but when he preached to them that "the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world" the Jews sought to take his life (see 1 Nephi 1:19-20).

[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 1:19-20]

1 Nephi 10:7 **And He Spake Also concerning a Prophet Who Should Come Before the Messiah:**

Cleon Skousen notes that John the Baptist had been born in the vicinity of Bethlehem where his parents lived in "the hill country" of Judea. (Luke 1:39-40) Thus he would have also had a connection with the massacre of the children at Bethlehem, the purpose of which was to eliminate the Christ child (see Matthew 2:16). Joseph Smith described these circumstances as follows:

When Herod's edict went forth to destroy the young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under the hellish edict, and Zacharias caused his mother to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locust and wild honey. . . . When the father [Zacharias] refused to disclose his [John's] whereabouts, and being the officiating high priest at the temple that year, he was slain by Herod's order, between the porch and the altar, as Jesus said. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 261).

During his ministry, Jesus referred to this tragic event and equated it with the murders of many other prophets down through the years. He said:

Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple. (Luke 11:49-51)

Notice that according to Luke, Jesus made no attempt to identify which Zacharias he was talking about, because no doubt this heinous murder of the priest at the temple just three decades earlier was fresh in the minds of all the people. However, since there were numerous

prophets by this or similar names in the Bible, some ancient scribe who was working on the Gospel of Matthew decided to identify this Zacharias mentioned by Jesus as the "son of Barachias." (Matthew 23:35) This created all kinds of problems because the ancient prophet Zechariah (note the slight difference in spelling)--who is described as "the son of Berechiah," (Zechariah 1:1)--was not slain in the temple. He was one of the prophets involved in the building of the second temple (Temple of Zerubbabel dedicated in 516 B.C.), but there is no indication he was slain there. (see LDS Dictionary under 51 "Zachariah")

Nevertheless, there was another ancient prophet named Zechariah who was slain in the temple, but he was the "son of Jehoiada" (2 Chronicles 24:20-21).^{xiii}

All of this confusion was eliminated when Joseph Smith learned that Jesus was not talking about either of those ancient prophets. He was talking about Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

Many years after Joseph Smith's death, Bible scholars found certain early Christian writings that sustained Joseph Smith's statement concerning Zacharias.

Dr. Robert Matthews, in his splendid definitive work on the life of John the Baptist, quotes this material. He said there is:

A very old tradition, as old at least as the second century, that Herod also sought to destroy at the same time the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth--the young St. John, whose greatness had been foretold to him; that Elisabeth escaped with her son from amid the slaughter, and was afterwards miraculously preserved, and that Herod, in his rage at being thus baffled, sent and slew Zacharias between the altar and the Temple. (Robert Matthews, *A Burning Light*, Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1972, p. 25: a similar account has also been found in the *Apocryphal New Testament*, published in 1953, and quoted by Dr. Matthews in his book on p. 26.)

[W. Cleon Skousen, *Days of the Living Christ*, Vol. 1, pp. 64-66]

Note* Early Christian tradition states that the elderly Elisabeth died while John was still a boy and he was thereafter adopted by one of the desert communities. (Matthews, *A Burning Light*, p. 27; see also W. Cleon Skousen, *Days of the Living Christ*, Vol. 1, p. 67). Was the community to which John the Baptist was supposedly sent a rightful heir to priesthood authority, or just a devout group of humble Jews?

1 Nephi 10:7 [Lehi] Spake Also concerning a Prophet Who Should Come before the Messiah to Prepare the Way of the Lord:

According to Robert Matthews, there is no missing the fact that John the Baptist was one of the most divinely heralded and preannounced figures of history. Very few persons have been so singled out and categorized in advance by the sacred writings. Not only was his name specified beforehand by revelation, but much information about his activities, geographical location, and eating habits, and even the precise words and topics of his preaching were revealed to various prophets before his birth. The earliest allusion to John the Baptist is found in Isaiah 40:3-5 (approximately 700 B.C.). Matthew, Mark, and Luke each interpret this prophecy as having reference to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6), while John implies that the Baptist himself is quoted as saying that he is the one of whom Isaiah spoke (John 1:22-23). Mark infers that Malachi also spoke of John the Baptist's mission (Mark 1:2). The passage, although not specifically identified by Mark, is actually found in Malachi 3:1. Matthew and Luke imply that Jesus himself declared that John the Baptist was indeed the very one who Malachi had predicted would come (Matthew 11:10; also Luke 7:27).

A few months before John's birth into mortality, the angel Gabriel came to Zacharias and announced that he latter would become the father of a son (Luke 1:13-17; see also Luke 1:76-77, 79). In these words of the angel are several especially significant pronouncements:

- (1) the child should be named "John";
- (2) many should rejoice at this birth;
- (3) he should be great in the sight of the Lord;
- (4) he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb;
- (5) he should turn many people to the Lord;
- (6) he should go forth in the spirit and power of Elias.

In the Book of Mormon John the Baptist is not mentioned by name, but his mission is discussed with considerable detail in at least three instances:

- (1) Lehi spoke concerning his mission (1 Nephi 10:7-10)
- (2) Nephi saw in vision the work of John (1 Nephi 11:27); and
- (3) Nephi later enlarged upon this part of his vision (2 Nephi 31:4, 8)

The ancient prophets could not have spoken so definitely of John's forthcoming mission if it had not already been known and arranged in heaven. Concerning the matter of pre-earth appointment the Prophet Joseph Smith explained: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was." (*Teachings*, p. 365). One cannot avoid the conclusion that John particular mission of being forerunner, baptizer, and witness for the Redeemer of the world was assigned to him in the Grand Council of heaven, and that such a mission could be entrusted only to a special person capable of carrying out the responsibility.

In the selection of the mortal lineage through which John would come to earth, there

was some ancient law and procedure to be followed, for in order to be legally entitled to the priesthood of Aaron and to function as a priest under the law of Moses one had to be a literal descendant of Aaron (see Exodus 30:30-31; 40:15) The things of the law of Moses, especially with regard to the qualifications of the priests and their functions in the offering of various animal sacrifices, were designed by revelation to prefigure and typify the Messiah and to bear witness of him. Heavy penalties were affixed to the performance of sacred rites and duties without the proper authority (see Numbers 16:1-40; 1 Chronicles 13:7-10; 2 Chronicles 26:16-21) It was, therefore, essential that when the Messiah came in person as the Lamb of God, John, the forerunner and witness of the Lamb, should be of the proper lineage to qualify him for the mission. If it was necessary for a priest to be of the lineage of Aaron in order to labor with the sacrificial symbols, which were only prefigures of the Messiah, how much greater the necessity that John, the forerunner of the Messiah in person, be of the proper priestly lineage and authority. The Lord, therefore, chose Zacharias, a priest of the family of Aaron, and Elisabeth, his wife, one of the "daughters of Aaron" (Luke 1:5) to be the mortal parents who would provide the right lineage to complete the inheritance.

In an interesting sidenote, one finds that Zacharias literally sacrificed his own life (putting in force the covenant he made with the Lord) that John would be able to complete his mission. Matthews comments that in order to rid himself of the child that was born "King of the Jews" he "sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old, and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men" (Matthew 2:16). How Jesus escaped this slaughter is familiar to us all: Joseph was warned in a dream to take Mary and Jesus into Egypt until Herod was dead. But how did John the son of Zacharias escape? John was approximately the same age as Jesus and lived in the approximate area of Bethlehem. The common knowledge that was had of the miraculous events attending his birth and the prospect of his future mission would surely have placed him under the suspicion of Herod and made him subject to the king's envy. The scriptures do not discuss John's relationship to Herod's edict, but the Prophet Joseph Smith did, and his words enlighten us considerably:

We will commence with John the Baptist. When Herod's edict went forth to destroy the young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under the hellish edict, and Zacharias caused his mother to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey. When his father refused to disclose his hiding place, and being the officiating high priest at the Temple that year, [he] was slain by Herod's order, between the porch and the altar, as Jesus said. (*Teachings*, p. 261).

This very interesting explanation by the Prophet Joseph throws light on an otherwise mysterious passage in Matthew 23:35, wherein Jesus said:

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Bible commentators^{xiv} have been at a loss to identify the "Zacharias" referred to in Matthew 23:35, but in the light of the Prophet's identification of the man as the father of John the Baptist, the passage takes on considerable historical meaning.

There is an ancient tradition about the death of Zacharias that is similar to the foregoing explanation by the Prophet Joseph Smith. This is referred to by Anna Brownell Jameson in her book, *The History of Our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art*:

There is a very old tradition, as old at least as the 2nd century, that Herod also sought to destroy at the same time the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth--the young St. John, whose greatness had been foretold to him; that Elizabeth escaped with her son from amid the slaughter, and was afterwards miraculously preserved, and that Herod, in his rage at being thus baffled, sent and slew Zacharias between the altar and the Temple.^{xv}

The legend is also mentioned in New Testament apocryphal materials:

Now Herod sought for John, and sent officers to Zacharias, saying: Where hast thou hidden thy son? And he answered and said unto them: I am a minister of God and attend continually upon the temple of the Lord: I know not where my son is. And the officers departed and told Herod all these things. And Herod was wroth and said: His son is to be king over Israel. And he sent unto him again, saying: Say the truth: where is thy son? for thou knowest that thy blood is under my hand. And the officers departed and told him all these things. And Zacharias said: I am a martyr of God if thou sheddest my blood: for my spirit the Lord shall receive, because thou sheddest innocent blood in the fore-court of the temple of the Lord. And about the dawning of the day Zacharias was slain. And the children of Israel knew not that he was slain. (Montague Rhodes James, trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 48. The Book of James, or Protevangelium, Chapter 23, verses 1-3)

[Robert J. Matthews, *A Burning Light: The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist*, pp. 3-8, 17-18, 24-26]



1 Nephi 10:7 **A prophet [John] who should come before the Messiah (Illustration):** John Preaching in the Wilderness. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Gospel Art, #207]



1 Nephi 10:8 **The Wilderness (Illustration):** Wilderness of Judea, near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. The wilderness of Judea covers an area approximately thirty miles long by ten miles wide. The Negev dessert surrounds it on the south, the hill country of Ephraim on the north, The Dead Sea on the east, and the hill country of Judah on the west. This wilderness receives very little rainfall, providing meager forage for flocks and very little water for Bedouin who still pitch their tents there. John the Baptist probably taught the gospel in this wilderness, and Jesus fasted here for forty days. Photograph by Tana and Mac Graham. [Donald W. Parry, [Visualizing Isaiah](#), p. 63]

1 Nephi 10:8 **Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord:**

According to Bruce R. McConkie, Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3-5), Lehi (1 Nephi 10:7-10), and Nephi (1 Nephi 11:27) all prophesied "concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord." As Nephi recorded: "Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight." (1 Nephi 10:7-8). This Book of Mormon account pertains only to John's ministry in the meridian of time. Isaiah, however, in his prophecy, is speaking only incidentally of the preparatory work of John and more particularly and extensively of the Second Coming when every valley shall be exalted and the Lord shall be revealed to reign personally on earth.

Matthew and Mark record John's true claim that he came to fulfil Isaiah's promise that one should come in that day to prepare the Lord's path. Luke does the same, but then continues the quotation, leaving the false inference that John claimed he was then fulfilling the glorious predictions relative to the Second Coming. But in Luke's account, as found in the Inspired version, the Prophet inserted more than five verses which show clearly that John was claiming to be the promised forerunner of time's meridian, and that the Isaiah quotation about the mountains being brought low and all flesh seeing the salvation of God, had reference not in the first but to the Second Coming of the Lord:

As it is written in the book of the *prophet* Esaias; *and these are the words*, saying, The

voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, *and* make his paths straight.

For behold, and lo, he shall come, as it is written in the book of the prophets, to take away the sins of the world, and to bring salvation unto the heathen nations, to gather together those who are lost, who are of the sheepfold of Israel;

Yea, even the dispersed and afflicted; and also to prepare the way, and make possible the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles;

And to be a light unto all who sit in darkness, unto the uttermost parts of the earth; to bring to pass the resurrection from the dead, and to ascent up on high, to dwell on the right hand of the Father,

Until the fulness of time, and the law and the testimony shall be sealed, and the keys of the kingdom shall be delivered up again unto the Father;

To administer justice unto all; to come down in judgment upon all, and to convince all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds, which they have committed; and all this in the day that he shall come;

For it is a day of power; yea, every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth;

And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Inspired Version, Luke 3:2, 4-11)

John held the priesthood, received revelations, enjoyed the companionship of the Holy Ghost, angels ministered to him, and he was expressly commanded to stand forth as the Lord's forerunner. (D.& C. 84:26-28) The prophet Joseph Smith declared that "John, at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth. And holding the keys of power, the Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 276).

[Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol. 1, pp. 112-113, 115-116]

1 Nephi 10:8 Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord, and Make His Paths Straight:

According to Adam Clarke, the idea of "Prepar[ing] . . . the way of the Lord," and "mak[ing] his paths straight" (Matthew 3:3; see also 1 Nephi 10:8 and Isaiah 40:3) is taken from the practice of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition, or took a journey through a desert country, sent harbingers before them, to prepare all things for their passage; and pioneers to open the passes, to level the ways, and to remove all impediments.

[Adam Clarke, Clark's Commentary: Matthew-Revelation, p. 51]

1 Nephi 10:8 There Standeth One among You Whom Ye Know Not; and He Is Mightier Than I, Whose Shoe's Latchet I Am Not Worth to Unloose:

In 1 Nephi 10:8 we find a prophecy, which also occurs in Isaiah 40:3-5, about one who would cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. However, there are some words that Nephi records of Lehi's vision that have been criticized because they seem to come exclusively from the New Testament. In 1 Nephi 10:8 we find the following:

"for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

While in Luke 3:16 we read:

"John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Thus the critics claim that Joseph Smith plagiarized the Bible in constructing the Book of Mormon.

While it is not readily apparent where these scriptural details came from, there are a number of logical explanations:

(1) Both Nephi and Lehi saw the same vision of the future. If that vision was detailed enough, they could have actually seen and heard John speak those words. In fact, those specific words might have been considered John's own prophecy. To this critics will cry "Foul!" How could John be speaking King James English? However, they fail to understand the process of revelation. Joseph Smith was inspired to translate in the style and composition of the day.

(2) There might have been more to the words of Isaiah on the brass plates than what was later conveyed to the King James Bible. Robert Millet says the following:

Let me say that I am convinced, after years of study, that the closest approximation you and I have to the brass plates, that is, one of the best ways we can get close to understanding what was on the brass plates, is Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible. If you want to know what was there beyond what is obviously in the Book of Mormon, look at the Joseph Smith Translation. (Robert L. Millet, "The Prophets of the Brass Plates," Video Transcript, FARMS, 1996, pp. 7-8; see also the commentary on Helaman 8:17)

(3) The words which are attributed to John might have come from prophecies of other ancient prophets not recorded in the King James Bible nor the Book of Mormon. Robert Millet writes that "there is a pattern among the Nephites as to how they preach the gospel. The great teachers in the Book of Mormon always do it a certain way. They stand up, introduce the subject, then they go back and cite the ancient prophets, and then they bear their own witness" (Millet, "The Prophets of the Brass Plates," pp. 10-11) So John could have been using ancient

prophetic words to establish the validity of Christ. As to who originally spoke these words we have no record, however the Book of Mormon records that there were many who wrote concerning Christ (and presumably John):

Yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel. (1 Nephi 19:10; see also Alma 33:15; 34:7; Helaman 8:20; 3 Nephi 10:16)

(4) As a final note, the reader should be aware that this particular section of First Nephi lies at the heart of a complete chiastic structure testifying that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God. In doing so it overlaps the testimonies of Lehi and Nephi, and Isaiah, and presumably other prophets who have gone before them, (and in John's case, perhaps after them). Could they be doing this that perhaps we might "know what great things the Lord has done for their fathers; and that [we] may know the covenants of the Lord, that [we are not cast off forever" (Title Page, Book of Mormon)?
[Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

1 Nephi 10:9 **He Should Baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan:**

Nephi records that according to the prophecies of his father Lehi, "he (the Messiah) should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan" (1 Nephi 10:9). According to Cleon Skousen, this Bethabara seems to be identical with Beth-barah mentioned in Judges 7:24. It means "Fords of Abarah" and was the ford leading from the Jericho side of the river over across into Gilead. The town was located on the east side of the river adjacent to the crossing and was therefore called Beth-barah, "beyond" Jordan. Lehi's prediction was literally fulfilled as indicated in John 1:28, which says "these things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."
[W. Cleon Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 1083]

1 Nephi 10:9 **And My Father Said He Should *Baptize* . . . the Messiah:**

[See the commentary on 2 Nephi 9:23]



1 Nephi 10:9 **He [John the Baptist] shall baptize the Messiah with water (Illustration):** Christ's Baptism. As Lehi prophesied, the Messiah (Jesus) would be baptized by a prophet (John the Baptist) "who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord." Artist: Robert T. Barrett. [Thomas R. Valletta ed., *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families*, 1999, p. 26]

1 Nephi 10:9 He Should Baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan:

According to Adam Clarke, the term "Bethabara" (1 Nephi 10:9) signifies literally the *house of passage*, and is thought to be the place where the Israelites passed the river Jordan under Joshua (*Clark's Commentary*, p. 518). According to another source, by the time of Origen (A.D. 250) the place where John baptized "beyond Jordan" was unknown. Origen preferred the reading "Bethabara," since this place was known in his day and, moreover, this choice might in his opinion be corroborated by allegory. . . . Origen preferred this reading while admitting that the majority of contemporary manuscripts were against him. He gives its etymology as "house of preparation," which he associated with the Baptist's "preparation." In his day he says, this place was shown as the place of John's baptism. (*The Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, p. 186)



Classic.scriptures.lds.org

1 Nephi 10:9 **Bethabara:**

According to Reynolds and Sjodahl, the place where John baptized is called "Bethabara" (1 Nephi 10:9) The meaning of that word is "house" or "place of passing over," supposed to

refer to the place where the Israelites passed over Jordan: "Beth-Abarah." It is also called "Bethany" from a word which is said to mean, "place of ships" (boats). It was a place "beyond Jordan," and is not the Bethany on the Mount of Olives, the name of which comes from a word meaning "place of dates." [George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 73]



1 Nephi 10:9 **He [John the Baptist] shall baptize the Messiah with water (Illustration):** John the Baptist Baptizing Jesus. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Gospel Art, #208]

1 Nephi 10:9 **He Should Baptize in Bethabara, Beyond Jordan:**

In John 1:28; 10:40; and 1 Nephi 10:9, there is a clear reference to a specific place for John the Baptist's work, stating that he was baptizing in Bethabara or Bethany beyond the Jordan. The question is, Where is Bethany (Bethabara) beyond the Jordan?

Potter and Wellington note that Theodosius (A.D. 530) says that it was five Roman miles

from the Dead Sea to the place where Jesus was baptized, and to where there was a church of St. John, but it is not clear whether the church was on the east or west bank of the River. He says explicitly that the Jesus was baptized on the east site (Jordan) and he also refers to the little hill closeby where Elijah was taken up. Obviously he means the little hill which was called Hermon, Elijah hill, Jebel MarElyas and recently, Tell el Kharrar. A team from the Department of Antiquities of Jordan has conducted Archaeological excavations in the area since March 1997. Archaeological excavations on the southern bank of Wadi el-Kharrar revealed the presence of several sites, with architectural remains scattered throughout the area. In July 1999 Dr. Mohammed Waheeb wrote concerning this site: "Not far from the Jordan River, at a distance of one mile to the east, is the place where the Prophet Elijah was taken into heaven in a chariot of fire (see 2 Kings 2:11-13).

This historical mixture of the place where John the Baptist preached his preparatory gospel of repentance and baptism, and where Elijah (Elias in the New Testament) was taken up into heaven raises an interesting point. Joseph Smith introduced the doctrine of the spirit and office of "an Elias," or one who prepares the way (see Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976, pp. 335-341). This doctrine is unique to Latter-day Saints. Both Elijah and John the Baptist were acting in the office and spirit of an Elias (see inspired version John 1:21-18 and Matthew 17:14). The association of John the Baptist and the prophet Elijah in the minds of the people can also be seen in the Apostle's response of "*Some say thou art Elijah*" in answer to Jesus' question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" (Matthew 16:13-14).

What better way could John the Baptist have taught the principle of his calling of an Elias than by choosing to preach in the same place as the hill where Elias (Elijah) was taken into Heaven. It is interesting that Joseph Smith taught of the doctrine of an Elias when the knowledge of the relationship between the place where John the Baptist preached and the hill where Elias (Elijah) was taken into Heaven was only found in an obscure text. One has to question if this is more than coincidence.

[George Potter and Richard Wellington, [Discovering The Lehi-Nephi Trail](#), Unpublished Manuscript, 2000, pp. 297-298] [See the Potter commentary on 1 Nephi 2:5]

Note* Was this area of wadi El-Kharrar also the same place from which Joshua led the children of Israel through the water of the river Jordan and into the Promised Land? Could this have symbolic covenant significance? In other words, when Lehi and his family departed into the wilderness to escape the covenant destruction of Jerusalem (the capital city of the Promised Land), was Lehi symbolically retracing the path of Israel's entrance into the Promised Land? And if Moses and Joshua represented a type of Christ, did Jesus' (note the name) covenant baptism in the river Jordan and subsequent mission to the inhabitants of the Promised Land parallel Joshua's (note the name) leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land? And if so, then did Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness geographically parallel the sojourn of Israel? And if so, then did Jesus visit Mount Sinai preparatory to his mission just as Moses did? And if Elijah was a type

for Elias, and if John the Baptist was an Elias, did John the Baptist visit Mount Sinai while he was in the wilderness just as Elijah did? [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes]

Note* See the commentaries on 1 Nephi 1:1, 4:2, 11:1; 3 Nephi 25:4.

1 Nephi 10:10 **He Should Behold and Bear Record That He Had Baptized the Lamb of God:**

According to Robert Matthews, the accounts given in Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell of John's preaching to "prepare . . . the way" for the Lord, whereas the fourth Gospel emphasizes that John came to "bear witness" of the Lord. Matthew, Mark, and Luke deal with John's ministry *before* he baptized Jesus, and therefore emphasize preparing the way, while the fourth Gospel deals with John's ministry *after* he baptized Jesus, and hence the emphasis on being a witness.

An analysis of John the Baptist's words leaves one impressed with his extensive knowledge of the gospel and the wide range of gospel topics which are found in his teachings. Martin Luther felt that except for Jesus and possibly Paul, John the Baptist was better informed on the Old Testament than any other personality in the New Testament.^{xvi} Indeed, the Inspired Version by Joseph Smith projects an even greater image of John, especially with regard to the scope of his gospel knowledge (see JST Matthew 3:27-32; 3:33-36, 38-41, 45-46; 11:12-14; 17:9-14; Mark 1:5-6; 9:3, 9-11 Luke 3:3-11, 13, 17-20; 16:17-21; John 1:6-9, 15, 20-33; 3:26-36). John came both as a *forerunner* to prepare the way before the Lord and also as a *witness* that Jesus is the Messiah, and what we have of John's teachings are directed primarily to these ends. To prepare the way before the Lord and bear a witness of him required that John have considerably more to say than simply to mention the fact that the Messiah was coming. He was divinely commissioned to "overthrow the kingdom of the Jews," and "prepare . . . [a people] for the coming of the Lord" (D&C 84:28). An adequate testimony must include something about the purpose of the Messiah's coming, the work that he would do, the significance of that work, and something of the laws and principles pertaining to his kingdom. If such were not the case, then what was the need of the pre-earth appointment of the forerunner, the frequent mention of him in prophecy, the specific earthly lineage, the special ordination by an angel, and the years of training and preparation prior to the forerunner's public ministry? The responsibilities of John's divine commission included a proclamation of the laws and principles of the gospel as well as the announcement that the Messiah was among them in person. In addition to sealing this testimony concerning these things with his life, John also prepared a written record (see D&C 93:6-18).

[Robert J. Matthews, *A Burning Light: The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist*, pp. 35, 45-78]

1 Nephi 10:10 He Had Baptized the Lamb of God:

This section may be called "the Lamb Section" because the word "Lamb," referring to Christ, occurs 59 times. The word "Lamb" is only found thirteen times elsewhere in the Book of Mormon. [See the commentary on 1 Nephi 14:24] [Zarahemla Research Foundation, Study Book of Mormon, p. 19]

1 Nephi 10:10 The Lamb of God Who Should Take Away the Sins of the World:

John Tvedtnes reports that according to the writings of Theodor Reik and Karl Abraham, the prayer shawl, or *tallith*, worn by Jews during certain prayers,^{xvii} is actually a representation of the sacrificial ram.

Though often made of silk, the prayer shawl is ideally made of sheep's wool, and some worshipers prefer the wool of lambs raised in the Holy Land. The rectangular shawl has tassels (*zizzith*) attached to each corner,^{xviii} each tassel consisting of four white and four blue threads and bound together by knots formed by the longest thread.^{xix} Reik suggest that "the tallith, made from the wool of a ritually clean animal, might be the substitute for the fleece of a ram, originally roughly cured and worn by the Hebraic tribes. The zizzith would then allude to the animal's four legs, and the knotting of the many threads would represent the joints,"^{xx} to which [Tvedtnes] adds that the blue threads may have originally represented the veins running through the legs.

Reik concludes that wearing the *tallith*, a garment sacred to the Jews, was originally intended to identify the wearer with the God of Israel.^{xxi}

To the Christian--and to Latter-day Saints in particular--this would suggest that the wearer "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27; compare Romans 13:14), thus representing "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).^{xxii} or to "The Lamb of God who should take away the sins of the world" (1 Nephi 10:10)]. When, therefore, the priests wore the prayer shawl and raised their arms to bless the people, they unknowingly symbolized the Messiah too.

[John A. Tvedtnes, "Temple Prayer in Ancient Times," in The Temple in Time and Eternity, F.A.R.M.S., pp. 86-87]

John Tvedtnes notes that the tallith today is usually an undergarment covering the chest and upper back, worn by Orthodox Jewish men. For certain prayers, however, a larger version is worn draped over the head (hence the term "prayer shawl"). According to Jewish tradition, this tallith is at least dated back to the time of Noah and Shem.^{xxiii} Anciently, it also appears to have been a long garment.

[John A. Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," in Temples of the Ancient World, p. 659]



Tallith en.wikipedia.org



1 Nephi 10:10 **(The Tallith--Priestly clothing representing the Lamb of God) [Illustration]:** Figure 53. In this Dutch engraving of 1725, the worshiper wears the *tallith* over his three-corner hat. The "prayer shaw" has four embroidered corners from which hand the *tzitzith*, consisting of eight threads and five knots each. He wears *tefelin*, or phylacteries, on his left hand and forehead. [John A. Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," in Temples of the Ancient World, p. 660]

1 Nephi 10:10 **The Lamb of God, Who Should Take Away the Sins of the World:**

What cultural insight might one find in the title "The Lamb of God who should take away the sins of the world"? (1 Nephi 10:10). According to Alfred Edersheim, perhaps Jewish

tradition may here prove both illustrative and helpful. That the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem was a settled conviction. Equally so was the belief, that He was to be revealed from *Migdal Eder*, "the tower of the flock" (Targum Pseudo- Jon on Gen. xxxv 21). This *Migdal Eder* was not the watchtower for the ordinary flocks which pastured on the barren sheepground beyond Bethlehem, but lay close to the town [of Bethlehem], on the road to Jerusalem. A passage in the Mishnah (Shek. vii 4) leads to the conclusion that the flocks which pastured there were destined for Temple-sacrifices. In fact the Mishnah (Baba K. vii. 7) expressly forbids the keeping of flocks throughout the land of Israel, except in the wildernesses--and the only flocks otherwise kept, would be those for the Temple-services (Baba K. 80 a). Accordingly, the shepherds who watched over them were not ordinary shepherds. [Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, pp. 186-187]

Thus, the shepherds who "were in the same country" "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night," and who were visited by "the angel of the Lord," who went to Bethlehem and "found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger," and who "made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child" (Luke 2:8-17) were perhaps no ordinary shepherds, but specially chosen men of the priesthood who had been assigned to watch over and testify of the quality of the special lambs who would be symbolically sacrificed in the temple to take away the sins of the children of Israel. [Alan C. Miner, Personal Notes] [See the commentary on Alma 7:10]

1 Nephi 10:10 **The Lamb of God:**

According to Joy Osborn, in the Old Testament, the Lord is never referred to as the "Lamb of God," yet the Book of Mormon repeatedly refers to the promised Messiah as the "Lamb of God." Herein lies a bit of evidence which verifies the fact that these Nephite descendants of Joseph did, indeed, have the writings of the ancient prophets with them, and especially the writings of Joseph.

Though he is never referred to as the "Lamb of God" in the Old Testament, prophecies of Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, as the sacrificial Lamb of God are clearly seen in the rituals and sacrificial beliefs of ancient Israel. Moses is instructed by the Lord to call and set Aaron and his sons apart as priests over Israel. A "firstling of the flock" - "without blemish" was to be offered up as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of Israel. Then there was to be a "scapegoat" who would carry away on his head the sins of Israel. This was symbolic of and in anticipation of the Lamb of God who would become the "scapegoat" and take upon himself the sins of the people. (Leviticus 16:21-22)

Several hundred years later after Israel had been divided into two separate nations, the northern House of Israel - Joseph, and the southern House of Judah became a wicked people. They turned away from the God of Israel and began to worship Baal - the god of the Canaanites.

The former sacrifice of an unblemished lamb evolved into the cruel sacrifice of their children to the god Moloch. In their wickedness, belief in the God of Israel and the promised Messiah as the Lamb of God was lost.

That the ancient prophets had known, and prophesied of the Savior as the Lamb of God, is seen in the references to Jesus as the Lamb of God in the New Testament. The apostle John wrote that when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he declared: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Later, the apostle Peter describes Jesus as a "lamb without blemish" who was foreordained to his calling before the foundation of the world:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (1 Peter 1: 18-20)

Then, in the Book of Revelation, the apostle John sees the final judgements that will come upon the earth, and describes the honor, praise, and glory that is bestowed upon the Lamb of God and his worthy followers, as they stand before the throne of God.

John sees that Babylon the Great "shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17:14). In Revelation, Chapter 21, John sees the "holy city" - the new Jerusalem "descending out of heaven from God," and none shall enter in "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

In the Book of Mormon both Nephi and his father Lehi were shown visions of the birth of the Messiah and his mission here on earth. Both were shown that a prophet would be sent to "prepare the way of the Lord" that he would baptize the Messiah with water, and would bear record "that he had baptized the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world" (1 Nephi 10: 10, 11:27).

Joseph Smith's critics were quick to point to this as proof that he was simply plagiarizing from the Bible. Yet, Lord Kingsborough, in his Mexican Antiquities, stated: "The Aztecs have a tradition of a God suffering and crucified named Quetzalcoatl, and of one preceding Him to prepare the way and call them to repentance."

Why did the descendants of Joseph, who kept the records found in the Book of Mormon beginning in 600 B.C., refer so frequently to the promised Messiah as the Lamb of God, while the descendants of Judah in the Old Testament fail to refer to the Messiah as the Lamb of God, and only once even refer to him as the Messiah? (See book of Daniel) And why did these Nephite prophets, descendants of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh, constantly refer to the

promised Messiah as the Lamb of God, and identify him as the one who should take away the sins of the world?

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi, who has already stated that they have the writings of Joseph with them, prophesies of the coming of the Messiah in almost the same exact words spoken by Joseph so many years earlier in ancient Egypt. In the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, in the Testament of Joseph, Joseph tells of a dream in which he saw that a virgin from the tribe of Judah would give birth to the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world:

And I saw that a virgin was born from Judah, wearing a linen stole; and from her was born a spotless lamb. . . . And the angels and mankind and all the earth rejoice over him. . . . You, therefore, my children, keep the Lord's commandments; honor Levi and Judah, because from their seed will arise the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world, and will save all the nations, as well as Israel. (Testament of the Patriarchs, Testament of Joseph, 19:8-11)

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, including the Testament of Joseph, was not available to Joseph Smith when he translated the Book of Mormon from the ancient record on the gold plates written by Mormon. Yet we now know ancient Israel once accepted them as authentic canon. And Biblical scholars tell us that Jesus, himself, quoted from the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.

This helps us understand why the Nephite descendants of Joseph so frequently referred to the future Messiah as the Lamb of God, whereas the Old Testament, as we have it today, never referred to the future Messiah and Christ as the Lamb of God. This again gives support to the Book of Mormon statement that many plain and precious parts had been removed from ancient Israel's scriptures.

According to Nephi's record, they had the writings of Joseph with them when they fled from Jerusalem about 600 B.C. The Mayas of Central America and Mexico say their ancient ancestors came from across the sea and brought their Scriptures with them when they came.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in the caves of Qumran, we find the Essene's had scrolls containing the writings of Isaiah, as well as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.

Then the most important piece of evidence to support the fact that writings of Joseph would have been available to these descendants of Joseph when they fled from Jerusalem, as described in the Book of Mormon, can be found in The History of the Church, written by Eusebius, who is recognized as the Father of Early Church History, which shows that the early Christians recognized the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs as a part of the Old Testament scriptures of ancient Israel. In this Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, we find the Testament of Joseph and the Testament of Benjamin. Both describe the coming Messiah as the Lamb of

God. This explains why Lehi, Nephi, and the other Book of Mormon prophets so frequently referred to the coming Messiah as the Lamb of God and establishes the fact that these Book of Mormon prophets did actually and truly have the writings of Joseph with them.

[Joy M. Osborn, The Book of Mormon -- The Stick of Joseph, pp. 265-270]

1 Nephi 10:12 That They [the House of Israel] Should Be Compared Like unto an Olive Tree:

Brant Gardner notes that while the reader must wait until the book of Jacob for the extended allegory of the olive tree, Lehi and Nephi were obviously familiar with it, as Nephi made reference to the allegory in connection with the unfolding of Lehi's vision:

Yea, even my father spake much concerning the Gentiles, and also concerning the house of Israel, that they should be compared like unto an olive-tree, whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. (1 Nephi 10:12)

[Brant Gardner, "Brant Gardner's Page, Book of Mormon Commentary, <http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/LDStopics/1Nephi/1Nephi10.htm>, p. 4]

1 Nephi 10:12 The House of Israel . . . Like unto an Olive Tree:

In 1 Nephi 10:12 (and 1 Nephi 15:12), Nephi brings up the idea that in the teachings of Lehi, he compared the house of Israel to an Olive tree "whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth." This is not only subtle testimony to the truth of Isaiah's prophecies, but to the powerful allegory of Zenos recorded in Jacob 5.

McConkie and Millet state that the Lord chose an olive tree to dramatize the destiny of his chosen people. An olive tree almost never dies. It may be pruned and worked with over numerous generations before the fruit is such as to satisfy the owner of the vineyard; this is often after many and varied cuttings and trimmings and replantings. So it is with the house of Israel.

[Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1, p. 69]

1 Nephi 10:18 He Is the Same Yesterday, To-day, and Forever:

In 1 Nephi 10:18 we find: "[God] is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him." According to Camille Fronk, any serious study of the scriptures elicits queries related to the nature of the Lord's Church before the dispensation of the meridian of time. While such language as baptism unto repentance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Ghost is abundant in the New Testament record, such familiar terms are conspicuously absent in the Old Testament account. Are we then to conclude that these fundamental principles and

ordinances of the gospel were not understood and practiced before the coming of Jesus Christ? Numerous LDS scriptural sources and words of modern prophets suggest that the answer is "no." God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see D&C 20:12; Hebrews 13:8) and so are the saving principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Joseph Smith taught that the early inhabitants of this earth were as aware of the plan of salvation as those who have been instructed since the time of his coming. "We cannot believe that the ancients in all ages were so ignorant of the system of heaven as many suppose, since all that were ever saved, were saved through the power of this great plan of redemption, as much before the coming of Christ as since; if not, God has had different plans in operation . . . to bring men back to dwell with Himself; and this we cannot believe, since there has been no change in the constitution of man since he fell."^{xxiv}

Those prophets who succeeded Adam knew the same gospel and ordinances. "How could Abel offer a sacrifice and look forward with faith on the Son of God for a remission of his sins, and not understand the Gospel?," the Prophet Joseph asked. "If Abel was taught of the coming of the Son of God, was he not taught also of His ordinances? We all admit that the Gospel has ordinances, and if so, had it not always ordinances, and were not its ordinances always the same?"^{xxv} [Camille Fronk, "The Everlasting Gospel: A Comparison of Dispensations" in Voices of Old Testament Prophets: The 26th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, pp. 171-175]

1 Nephi 10:18 **[God] Is the Same Yesterday, To-day, and Forever:**

Matthew Brown notes that one fundamental teaching of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that the Savior's gospel has been on the earth "from the beginning" (D&C 20:21-26; cf Moses 5:58-59; JST John 1:1). This is in accordance with 1 Nephi 10:18 where we find that God "is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him."

Some Christian leaders who lived shortly after the apostolic age declared the same truth. Eusebius, who served as bishop of Caesarea in A.D. 339, said that "it is obvious that [the biblical patriarchs] knew God's Christ Himself, since He appeared to Abraham, instructed Isaac, spoke to [Jacob], and conversed freely with Moses and the prophets who came later. . . . Obviously we must regard the religion proclaimed in recent years to all nations through Christ's teaching as none other than the first, most ancient, and most primitive of all religions, discovered by Abraham and his followers."^{xxvi} Many of the early Christian writers such as Tatian (ca. A.D. 150), Justin Martyr (A.D. 165), Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200), Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 115-202), Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 160-215), Theophilus of Antioch (ca. A.D. 100-200), and Origen (ca. A.D. 185-251) also taught that Jesus Christ was the divine being who appeared unto mortals in the Old Testament. Therefore, Christianity was "not a new religion" but was "connected with the birth of mankind."^{xxvii} [Matthew B. Brown, All Things Restored: Confirming the Authenticity of LDS Beliefs, pp. 1-2]

NOTES

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- i. See Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 1946, pp. 58-59.
- ii. Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Vol. 6, p. 264.
- iii. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- iv. Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, p. 253
- v. Corbin T. Volluz, "Lehi's Dream of the Tree of Life: Springboard to Prophecy," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 2, Number 2 (Provo, Utah: FARMS), p. 35.
- vi. Dr. Abdul Hameed Al Hashah. General Director of Dammam Museum. Ministry of Education Eastern province, P.O. Box 1797, Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, personal communication.
- vii. The Arabian Sun. Vol. LII, No. 27, July 16th, 1997.
- viii. S. A. Amin, *The Arabian Sun*, Vol. LII, No. 27, July 16th. Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: Saudi Aramco, 1997, p. 1.
- ix. Hugh Nibley, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Vol. 6, p. 256.
- x. The Concise Oxford Dictionary, First edition 1911 (Oxford: Oxford University, 1983), 1051.
- xi. S. Kent Brown, Personal communication.
- xii. Evidence of tall buildings has been found by the French archaeological expedition in Shabwah, although there is no evidence as yet that these tall buildings date back to Lehi's time, nor does it appear that the family traveled that far south.
- xiii. *Clarke's Commentary*, an extensive commentary on the New Testament first published in the United States in 1824 gives the following interpretation:
It is likely that our Lord refers to the murder of Zachariah, mentioned [in] 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, who said to the people, *Why transgress ye the commandments of God, so that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord he hath forsaken you. And they conspired against him and stoned him--at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord. And when he died, he said, The Lord look upon and require it: vers. 21. 22.*
- But it is objected, that this Zachariah was called the son of *Jehoida*, and our Lord calls this one the son of *Barachiah*. Let it be observed, 1. That *double* names were frequent among the Jews; and sometimes the person was called by one, sometimes by the other.--Compare 1 Sam ix. 1, with 1 Chron. viii. 33, where it appears that the father of *Kish* had two names, *Abiel* and *Ner*. So *Matthew* is called *Levi*; compare Matt. ix. 9. with Mark ii. 14. So *Peter* was also called *Simon* and *Lebbeus* was called *Thaddeus*. Matt. x. 2, 3.
2. That Jerome says that, in the Gospel of the Nazarenes, it was *Jehoiada*, instead of *Barachia*.

3. That *Jehoiada* and *Barachiah* have the very same meaning, *the praise or blessing of Jehovah*.

4. That as the Lord *required* the blood of Zachariah so fully that in a year all the princes of Judah and Jerusalem were destroyed by the Syrians, and Joash, who commanded the murder, slain by his own servants, 2 Chron. xxiv. 23-25, and their state grew worse and worse, till at last the temple was burned, and the people carried into captivity by Nebuzaradan:--so it should also be with the present race. The Lord would, after the crucifixion of Christ, visit upon them the murder of all those righteous men, that their state should grow worse and worse, till at last the temple should be destroyed, and they finally ruined by the Romans. . .

Some think that our Lord refers, in the spirit of prophecy, to the murder of Zacharias, son of Baruch, a rich Jew, who was judged, condemned, and massacred in the temple by Idumean zealots, because he was rich, a lover of liberty, and a hater of wickedness. They gave him a mock trial; and, when no evidence could be brought against him of his being guilty of the crime they laid to his charge, viz. a design to betray the city to the Romans, and his judges had pronounced him *innocent* two of the stoutest of the zealots fell upon him and slew him in the *middle of the temple*. See Josephus, War, b. iv. chap. v. s. 5. See Crevier, vol. vi. p. 172, History of the Roman Emperors. Others imagine that Zachariah, one of the minor prophets, is meant, who might have been massacred by the Jews; for, though the account is not come down to us, our Lord might have it from a well known tradition in those times. But the former opinion is every way the most probable. [Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, Volume V.--Matthew to the Acts, p. 223]

xiv. See, for example, George Arthur Buttrick, et al., eds., *The Interpreter's Bible*, 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), 7:540; D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 845; J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible by Various Writers* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 701; and Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 2 vols. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), 2:103-4, all of which express difficulty in identifying the Zacharias mentioned in Matthew 23:35.

xv. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1865, p. 260. Mrs. Jameson continues: "In a Greek MS in the Bibliotheque Imperiale at Paris, with Byzantine miniatures of the 9th century, these events are simultaneously given. Here Herod and two counsellors are present, while one executioner and one child represent the massacre. In the same picture we see Zacharias being pierced with a lance, and Elizabeth and the young St. John enclosed in a rock, and seen only to the shoulders."

xvi. "There was never any that understood the Old Testament so well as St. Paul, except John the Baptist," Thomas Kepler, ed., *The Table Talk of Martin Luther* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1942), p. 255.

xvii. For a brief discussion and illustration of the *tallith*, see John A. Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 659-60.

xviii. These are the "fringes" mentioned in Numbers 15:37-39 and Deuteronomy 22:12 and the "hem" of the garment mentioned in Matthew 9:20,36.

xix. See Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism*, 110-11.

xx. Ibid., 141.

xxi. See *ibid.*, 141-51.

xxii. See *Midrash Bereshit Raabbah* 89:9 Zohar I, 194b.

xxiii. *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah* 36:6; *Midrash Tanhuma ha-Qadum weh-Yashan* I, 48-50; cited in *Lj*, 5:192, n. 61.

xxiv. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 59-60.

xxv. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 59.

xxvi. Geoffrey A. Williamson, trans., *Eusebius: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (New York: Dorset Press, 1984), 47-48. Eusebius also said that the "religion of Abraham" had "reappeared" in his day and was being practiced solely by the Christians. He proclaimed: "we who are of Christ practice one and the same mode of life and have one and the same religion as those not new; . . . it is the first and true religion" (*Church History*, 4.14-15 cited in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* [Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994], 1:88).

xxvii. Fernand Mourret, *A History of the Catholic Church* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1931), 1:352; see also Kirsopp Lake, trans., *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1:xv-xvi; *Address of Tatian to the Greeks*, 31, cited in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 2:77.