
1 NEPHI 19 – 2 NEPHI 5

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INTRODUCTION

1 NEPHI 19: THE POWER OF THE SCRIPTURES

1 NEPHI 19:1-6 MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NEPHI'S PLATES

19:1 ***I did make plates of ore.*** Nephi lists four records that he used as sources for what he has written upon the large plates (which he calls the “first plates” in v. 2 and “other plates” in v. 4):

- “the record of my father”
- “our journeying in the wilderness”
- “the prophecies of my father”
- “mine own prophecies”

It has been suggested that these were perhaps written first on parchment (animal skins), and now Nephi is making a more permanent record on the plates.

19:3 ***I had made these plates.*** Like 1 Nephi 6 and 9, this section explains the purpose of the large and the small (“these”) plates. The “other wise purposes” known only by the Lord include being able to have the early chapters of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi – Omni) at all, since Mormon’s compilation of the overlapping information disappeared with the 116 pages Martin Harris lost.

19:5 ***an account of my making these plates shall be given.*** The footnote correctly points to 2 Nephi 5:28-33, which is where we’ll discuss it in more detail as well.

1 NEPHI 19:7-17 NEPHI QUOTES FROM THE BRASS PLATES

19:7 ***the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet.*** Nephi gives this metaphor, which is only found once in the Old Testament (Psalm 91:13) and once in the New Testament (Matthew 7:6), though twelve times in the Book of Mormon. But knowing that he has written a metaphor and didn’t want anyone to misunderstand, he corrected himself, telling us that to symbolically trample God under our feet means to “set him at naught [disdain or treat as of no importance], and hearken [hear and obey] not to the voice of his counsels.”

19:8 ***in six hundred years***. Six hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem would be about A.D. 4, but Jesus was probably born about 6-4 B.C., 8-10 years before the six hundred years. As mentioned previously, several explanations have been proposed, including using a lunar calendar or counting the start of Zedekiah's reign differently. None of them seem on the money to me yet.

19:9 ***he suffereth it***. No matter men did to him, Jesus permits or allows it all to happen "because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering" towards us.

19:10 ***the God of our fathers...yieldeth himself***. Jesus is the Jehovah (Yahweh) of the Old Testament. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But Nephi saw that He came to earth and "yieldeth himself" to "wicked men."

Lifted up...crucified. Both prophets combined to teach this future truth, but both could also have been quoting Enoch: "...and he looked and beheld the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men" (Moses 7:55).

Zenock...Neum...Zenos. This is the first mention of these three prophets who gave plain and precious truths about Jesus' mortal ministry (He is to crucified and buried; three days of darkness will be a sign) and the destiny of the house of Israel (for example, Jacob interprets Zenos' allegory of the olive tree in Jacob 5). Their words were recorded on the brass plates but were lost since that day. Thus we only learn of these prophets in the Book of Mormon.

19:11 ***thus spake the prophet***. It appears from the context that this is Zenos being quoted here and through v. 17.

19:12 ***the God of nature suffers***. This phrase is found nowhere else in scripture. Alexander Campbell published the first anti-Mormon book in Feb 1831. One of his twelve points against the Book of Mormon was this phrase, claiming it was pagan in origin. But it is Jesus Christ, not pagan idols, who is the ultimate God of nature, and who created all of nature. Yet He condescended to come to earth and suffer in behalf of His creation.

19:13-17 The Jews who rejected and crucified Jesus were punished, driven from their home, and scattered across the earth. But in the last days, when they turn back to God, He will remember the covenants and will restore them. This citation of Zenos' prophecies and Nephi's comments in the next few verses set up the longer quotation of Isaiah in chapters 20-21.

19:18-24 "I DID LIKEN ALL SCRIPTURES UNTO US"

19:20 ***I have workings in the spirit***. Though not capitalized here, in the other verses with this phrase, it is clear that the Spirit is the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 1:6; Words of Mormon 1:7; Moroni 6:9). Like other prophets, Nephi is reporting that dealing with the Lord directly can be physically exhausting. In this case, he also seems to be wearying himself in behalf of those they left behind at Jerusalem.

19:21-22 ***teach my brethren these things***. Nephi taught those in the group about the promises found in the brass plates relating to their own family and their posterity.

19:23 ***persuade them to believe in the Lord***. Today, many people would not think first of reading Isaiah to their children to persuade them to believe in Christ, but that's exactly what Nephi did.

I did liken all scriptures unto us. Elder Gene R. Cook (*Searching the Scriptures*, p. 103-107) taught several ways to liken scriptures to ourselves:

- Ponder about their meaning, including asking questions about ourselves and our lives in relation to the scriptural topic.
- Pray for understanding.
- Use substitution—put your own name in the verse or the words “me” and “I”.
- Take notes of the feelings you have as you study and the things the Spirit teaches you.

1 NEPHI 20-21 (ISAIAH 48-49): GOD’S PLAN FOR ISRAEL

These two chapters are Nephi’s first quotations of Isaiah. He will quote many more chapters later, but these are the first ones he puts on his plates. Why, when it is so much work to make the plates and inscribe words on them, would he copy something already on the brass plates? Why not just say, ‘See Isaiah 48-49’ and let it suffice? Nephi gave two reasons: 1) “That they [his people] might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands, among people of old”; and, 2) “That ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off” (1 Nephi 19:24). Or, as he said a few verses earlier, Isaiah and the prophets knew “all things concerning them [the Jews]” and also “concerning us” (1 Nephi 19:21). Appropriately, the focus of 1 Nephi 20 (Isaiah 48) is the Jews, and 1 Nephi 21 (Isaiah 49) is the broken off branch, which Nephi directly relates to his own people. 1 Nephi 21 also features the role of the Gentiles prominently, causing some scholars to propose that Nephi is here speaking to more than just his family in the wilderness, but to others already in the land to whom the Lehites have joined—Gentiles to Nephi and his family, but who are now supporting and working with this broken off branch to help them survive in the new world.

There are many changes in these chapters, compared to the KJV text of Isaiah, and the careful reader is invited to compare the two and note all the differences. Here we will highlight only some of them, along with other key verses to the message. Also, the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of these two chapters is mostly unchanged compared to the KJV, meaning that the brass plates version is not carried over into the JST, as it is with 2 Nephi 12-24.

1 NEPHI 20:1-16 TO THOSE IN THE COVENANT

The key message in this section is that covenant Israel has been blessed with prophetic direction but has rejected it and dealt treacherously with the Lord.

20:1 *or out of the waters of baptism.* Some have cited this phrase as a clear example of the text being corrupted by the Jews, since it mentions baptism. However, this phrase was not in the original manuscripts or the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. It was added later, in 1840, in the Nauvoo printing, and seems to have been an interpretive comment by Joseph Smith, a phrase to explain what is meant by “the waters of Judah”, added as a parenthetical remark. It was subsequently dropped from LDS editions of the Book of Mormon until the 1920 edition, when it was added again but without the parentheses, and then it was retained in the 1981 edition. Jews would call this a *targum* or commentary, and though helpful, it does not have the authority of scripture. (Note that in the Joseph Smith Translation, it reads identically to the KJV.) Nevertheless, the Prophet’s commentary is useful to us, in showing that those who are to hearken are those who have made covenants with the Lord.

20:2 **they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel.** Many of the changes in this section emphasize the disobedience of Israel. Here they do NOT (added in the Book of Mormon) stay themselves or rely on God.

20:6 **Thou hast seen and heard all this.** A good summary of this section. God has given Israel plenty of instruction and witnesses to the truth, but they “didst not know them.”

20:10 **I have refined thee.** Nephi must have especially appreciated this metaphor, with his knowledge of metal work and his experience making a bellows and making tools. The Lord purifies us as a metal smith heats ore in the furnace to separate the pure metal from the impurities. See quotes from Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Robert D. Hales in *Institute Manual*, p. 45.

1 NEPHI 20:17-22 THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE

20:18 **peace been as a river.** Peace from God is like a river because it flows on and on without interruption, into eternity.

Righteousness as the waves of the sea. Righteousness is unstoppable, like a wave, which knocks down things in its path with force and power.

20:19 **seed...as the sand.** The covenant of Abraham is passed on to us as we take upon ourselves that covenant and obey the Lord.

20:20 **Go ye forth of Babylon.** In Nephi’s day, Babylon was at its peak of power and world domination. Its authority to rule was inescapable. But still the Lord called for his people to come out of Babylon, meaning wicked spiritual conditions. Indeed, the opposite of Babylon symbolically is the temple, which is the place we are called to go when we come out of Babylon (see D&C 38:42; 133:5, 14).

1 NEPHI 21:1-7 SONG OF THE SERVANT

President Wilford Woodruff declared that in our day, “the 49th chapter of Isaiah is having its fulfillment” (Parry, 424).

21:1 **Hearken, O ye house of Israel.** The entire first part of this verse, up to “Listen, O isles...” is a Book of Mormon addition.

the pastors of my people. The word “pastors” does not appear in the Old Testament except in the book of Jeremiah, who is contemporary with Lehi and Nephi. But the Hebrew word so translated in Jeremiah is found 24 times in Isaiah, and it means *shepherd*. So it is not a surprise that it was also here on the brass plates version of Isaiah of this verse and translated that way by Joseph Smith. It is at least in part due to the wickedness of those who should be caring for the spiritual welfare of the people that the Jews are scattered.

21:6 **a light to the Gentiles.** The servant is called not only to bless the house of Israel but to teach the entire world about the Lord.

1 NEPHI 21:8-26 THE RETURN OF ISRAEL

21:12 **And then, O house of Israel.** This addition and the one in verse 15 make the audience and message more clear: the Lord will establish and comfort his people.

21:14 **but he will show that he hath not.** Verse 14 without this phrase just sounds like a complaint, but with it shows that the complaint is not justified—for God will show he has neither forsaken nor forgotten.

21:16 **graven thee upon the palms of my hands.** This powerful image alludes, of course, to the wounds of the Savior Himself. It also reflects an ancient custom of putting an image or tattoo or sorts on their hands to show their devotion to a certain god. The Lord uses that metaphor to show His devotion to Israel.

21:21 **Who hath begotten me these.** The Lord proclaims that the land shall be “too narrow” for all the people He will gather (v. 18-19). In fact, it will be so many, that Israel will wonder where they all came from.

21:22 **lift up mine hand to the Gentiles.** The Gentiles will play a key role in the great latter-day gathering of Israel, such that they will carry Israel upon their shoulders back to the promised land.

21:25 **I will save thy children.** God will step in and intervene, fighting the enemies of Israel and saving their children. Note that the JST adds in this verse: “...the terrible shall be delivered; for **the mighty God shall deliver his covenant people. For thus saith the Lord, I will content with him them that contend with thee...**”

1 NEPHI 22: NEPHI INTERPRETS ISAIAH

22:1 **What meaneth these things.** Nephi’s brethren have listened to his reading but do not grasp the meaning. This allows us to ‘listen in’ to Nephi’s interpretation of these key chapters.

22:4 **the more part of all the tribes have been led away.** Less than a hundred years before Lehi left Jerusalem, the ten tribes were taken away by Assyria and soon lost to the knowledge of the remaining Jews. This verse alludes to their scattering “to and from upon the isles of the sea.” We do not know their location today, but an interesting apocryphal source says:

You saw him gather another great crowd of peace-loving people. These are the ten tribes of Israel who were taken away into captivity in the time of King Hoshea. King Shalmaneser of Assyria captured them and deported them to a foreign land east of the Euphrates River. But the ten tribes decided not to stay in that land among the many Gentiles, so they moved farther east to a country where no human beings had ever lived before. There they hoped to keep their laws, which they had failed to keep in their own country. When they had to make the difficult passage across the Euphrates, God Most High performed miracles for them and blocked the channels of the river until they had crossed over. Their long journey through that region, which is named Arzareth, took a year and a half, and they have lived there ever since. Now in these last days they are coming back home, and once again God Most High will block the channels of the river, so that they may cross over. That is the meaning of the great crowd of peace-loving people you saw (2 Esdras 13:39-47).

22:6-8 Nephi explained that the Lord would establish Gentiles on their land which would finally scatter the seed of Lehi. But after that, the Gentiles will also be the cause of a “marvelous work” which will bless their seed, and fulfill the image of them being carried in the arms of the Gentiles.

22:13 **they shall war among themselves.** Nephi tied his own vision to Isaiah’s verses here, teaching that the wicked will fight and kill themselves. This is what John saw in Revelation 17-18.

22:14 **tumble to the dust.** Nephi tied the great and abominable church directly to the large and spacious building, which falls from its exalted position in the sky to the earth and is destroyed (1 Nephi 11:36).

22:15 **saith the prophet.** This is probably Zenos again.

Satan shall have no more power. V. 26 explains why: “...because of the righteousness of his people.” Satan has no power over us unless we choose to give it to him. And yet v. 17 also indicates that “he will preserve the righteous by his power.” This is the role of grace in our lives: we can accomplish much through righteous efforts, but only by grace can we be truly successful. Only by grace can we be finally saved.

22:20-21 **A prophet...the Holy One of Israel.** Nephi quoted Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18, then interprets it from his own experience to be sure we understand this isn’t just a prophet, it is the Messiah, the Holy One (‘set apart’) of Israel.

22:23 **they who need fear.** The attributes of groups/organizations/institutions who will fear the Lord when He comes to establish His kingdom include those built up to:

- Gain profit.
- Get power over men.
- Become popular to the world.
- Seek the lusts of the flesh.
- Do all manner of iniquity.

In short, they who belong the kingdom of the devil will fail.

22:25 **one fold and one shepherd.** Showing the detailed view Nephi had of Jesus’ life, he quotes the Savior’s words also recorded in John 10:16. Jesus is the good shepherd, leading his sheep to the best pasture.

2 NEPHI 1-3: LEHI GIVES BLESSINGS TO HIS FAMILY

The break between the books we call 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi was on the plates, though both books were simply called “The Book of Nephi” in the original translation. “First” and “Second” were added later by Oliver Cowdery. As Joseph and Oliver were translating, they added chapters at natural breaks in the text (probably indicated on the plates by some kind of spacing). 1 Nephi had 7 chapters. When they started 2 Nephi, Oliver initially labeled it “Chapter VIII”. Later, he changed it to “Chapter I”, though he put it ahead of the colophon or preface, which actually covers more than just chapter 1 (it is after it now, but wasn’t put that way until 1879 by Orson Pratt).

It is interesting to note that the other Nephi books were also without numbers originally—they were just called “The Book of Nephi”. It wasn’t until Orson Pratt’s 1879 edition that they were designated as “III Nephi” and “IV Nephi”, though still retaining the original name as a secondary title, which is how they are designated even today. They were called “Third Nephi” and “Fourth Nephi” in the 1920 edition done by Elder James E. Talmage.

These first chapters convey Lehi’s final teachings to his family. Ironically, there is no blessing or conversation with Nephi recorded. No doubt it happened, but for whatever reason, Nephi left it out of the record (humility?). These chapters have the tone of a blessing, though it is not recorded that Lehi put hands on anyone. But whether he followed that priesthood pattern or simply spoke the words, the result is the same—a blessing on his children and his future posterity.

2 NEPHI 1:1-29 LEHI SPEAKS TO LAMAN, LEMUEL, SAM, AND THE SONS OF ISHMAEL

1:1 ***our father, Lehi, also spake many things.*** Lehi picked right up where Nephi left off in his reading (was Nephi reading because Lehi’s eyes had gone bad?), but quickly transitioned into his final counsel to his family.

1:2 ***concerning their rebellions upon the waters.*** He kindly didn’t mention all the other rebellions, murderous attempts, and other acts of sin, but limited himself to what happened in the ship on the way to the promised land.

1:4 ***I have seen a vision.*** This was Lehi’s seventh and final vision, wherein the Lord informed him that Jerusalem had indeed been destroyed. That destruction happened in 586 B.C., so this vision had to be after that, and before about 567 B.C., which is about when Nephi started writing on the small plates (see 2 Nephi 5:28).

1:6 ***brought by the hand of the Lord.*** Lehi learned that no one would be allowed by the Lord to come to the promised land without the explicit blessing of God—at least in his day. V. 8 indicates that that may change at a future date.

1:9 ***keep his commandments, they shall prosper.*** Lehi gave the ‘standard’ Book of Mormon formula for success: obedience = blessings. He also explained that they that “dwindle in unbelief” after knowing the gospel truths, coming to the promised land, and rejecting the “true Messiah” would be scattered and smitten and visited with bloodsheds.

1:12 ***I would that ye would remember.*** To ‘remember’ in the Book of Mormon is much more than to call something to mind. The Hebrew word is *zakhor* and is in the Old Testament over 200 times. It has as its meaning, “To be attentive, to consider, to keep divine commandments, or to act” (“O Man, Remember, and Perish Not,” Louis Midgley, in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*). The concept of remembering also occurs in the Book of Mormon over 200 times, with similar meaning. To remember is to respond faithfully to a covenant. Likewise, God remembers us when He keeps His part of the covenant. To remember in the scriptures is an action verb!

1:13 ***O that ye would awake.*** This verse begins a complex chiasm (inverted parallelism) that ‘peaks’ at vv. 17-18 and ends at v. 23.

1:14 ***a trembling parent...I go the way of all the earth.*** Lehi knew he was close to death, and like other great patriarchs, wanted to leave some final teachings with his posterity. The last phrase is

find in the Bible in 1 Kings 2:2, spoken by David as he is giving his own final advice to his designated heir, Solomon.

1:15 Just a marvelous image—and something we all hope we can say as we prepare for the day when we depart this life and transition into the next.

1:19 **his will be done.** Lehi prayed for the best for his rebellious sons, though he was resigned to the will of the Lord, which he knew are “righteousness forever”.

1:20 Probably the most concise statement yet of the central thesis of the Book of Mormon.

1:21 **be men...in one mind and in one heart, united in all things.** Few things are more powerful than righteous men, united in purpose and heart. Such men can move mountains, convert thousands, stand boldly before kings and rulers, and even get their home teaching done early in the month.

1:23 Lehi pulled together several scriptures from the brass plates, and some metaphors from the Spirit. “Awake” is probably from Isaiah 52:1. Paul says something similar to “put on the armor of righteousness” in 2 Corinthians 6:7, but Lehi would have got it from Isaiah 59:17. “Shake off the chains with which ye are bound” could be an allusion to Nahum 3:10. “Come forth out of obscurity” is perhaps Isaiah 29:18 or 58:10. And “arise from the dust” is probably Isaiah 52:2. Obviously, Lehi found Isaiah as compelling as Nephi.

1:24-27 **Rebel no more against your brother.** Nephi was faithful from the first day and saved the family’s life through his righteous behavior, yet Laman and Lemuel tried to kill him more than once. They believed Nephi “sought power and authority” over them, but Lehi says he only “sought the glory of God.” They complained because of his sharp teaching, but Lehi attributes that to the power of the word of God.

1:28-29 **my first blessing.** The older sons would all get the “first blessing” or best blessing, if they obeyed Nephi. But if they rebelled, the blessing would fall to him.

1:30-32 LEHI SPEAKS TO ZORAM OF HIS FAITHFULNESS

1:30 **thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever.** A very high compliment from Lehi, showing the true nature of Zoram’s ability and willness to keep his oath. Zoram’s seed so mixed with Nephi’s that they are not heard of again except in one instance—Ammoron, a Nephite dissenter, claimed to be a descendent of Zoram, “whom your fathers pressed and brought out of Jerusalem” (Alma 54:23).

2:1-30 LEHI SPEAKS TO JACOB OF THE MESSIAH

This section is about the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. See Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s comments in *Institute Manual*, p. 51.

2:1-2 **he shall consecrate thine afflictions for they gain.** See comments by Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Richard G. Scott, *Institute Manual*, p. 50.

2:4 ***thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory***. Later, Nephi says (2 Nephi 11:3) that Jacob has seen Jesus just as he has. Therefore, he, too, is an ‘apostle’, a witness of Christ’s mission, “even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh.”

salvation is free. There is no price that man can pay that will purchase the grace of God. Therefore, it is freely given. The word “grace” in Greek (as used in the New Testament) is *charis*, meaning a free gift that affords joy and delight, and the merciful kindness by which God turns souls to Christ.

2:5 ***by the law men are cut off***. Since it is impossible to obey the law of God with perfection in all things, by its existence, the law separates us from God, who cannot tolerate unclean things.

2:6 ***redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah***. Because we cannot obey the law without making mistakes, redemption (being released from prison or slavery) comes from our perfect relative, the Holy Messiah.

2:7 ***he offereth himself***. Lehi sacrificed animals to ask forgiveness of God, according to the Law of Moses. But the Messiah sacrificed himself as the offering, the only offering that covered sins forever. All he asks from us is “a broken heart and a contrite spirit,” the willingness to humble ourselves and salvation on His terms and in His way.

2:8 ***how great the importance to make these things known***. What a responsibility we have to share the message of the gospel with our brothers and sisters! There is only one way to salvation and happiness; if we know about it, our Father expects us to share.

2:9 ***he is the firstfruits unto God***. The Law of Moses dedicated the first part of the harvest to the Lord—given to the priests in the temple for their sustenance. Likewise, Jesus is that early fruit, picked ahead of the rest of us and dedicated to God.

2:11 ***there is an opposition in all things***. How many times do people without an understanding of the gospel ask the question, ‘If there is a God, why is there also evil in the world?’ If they could just read and comprehend 2 Nephi 2! There can be no good without evil, and there can be no progress without a choice between the two.

2:13 This is a marvelous piece of logic that ‘proves’ there must be a God because we exist.

2:14 ***And now, my sons***. Though he is speaking to Jacob specifically, this makes it clear that the whole family is still gathered around listening. Each conversation is a teaching moment for the whole family.

2:17-18 ***an angel of God...had fallen from heaven***. Somewhere (probably Isaiah 14) Lehi read about Satan falling from heaven. His fall is eternal, making him totally miserable, and he seeks to have us all experience the same misery.

2:21 ***a state of probation***. The word “probation” is not found in the King James Bible. But it is found several times in the Book of Mormon, used by Jacob, Nephi, Alma, Samuel the Lamanite, and Mormon. It’s likely that they all pick it up from Lehi’s use of the term here. Our probationary state is a gift from God. Without it, we would be condemned to never return to his presence as soon as we committed sin. But to give us chance to repent and apply the Atonement, we have our days “prolonged”.

2:23 **they would have had no children.** Nearly every aspect of the Fall is understood differently by members of the Church, but this one is a completely unique doctrine among the Latter-day Saints. Adam and Eve were commanded in the garden to have children, yet Lehi says they would never have kept that commandment until they fell. In other words, they choose to break the commandment not to eat of the fruit in order to keep the commandment to multiply (see 2:25).

having no joy, for they knew no misery. The great change in the garden after eating the fruit was knowing the difference between good and evil (Moses 4:11, 28; 5:10-11).

2:26-27 **redeemed from the fall...free forever.** See quote from President Howard W. Hunter, *Institute Manual*, p. 53.

2:28-29 **choose eternal life.** Because we are “free to choose” (v. 27), Lehi plead with his sons to choose eternal life, and not eternal death. We have the choice to surrender our wills to God or surrender them to Satan. We must choose one—there is no fence sitting in this life or the next.

2 NEPHI 3:1-25 LEHI SPEAKS TO JOSEPH OF MOSES AND JOSEPH SMITH

In this chapter, Lehi again showed the power of the Spirit to teach him. For though he had scriptures on the brass plates beyond what is in our King James Bible, he understood those scriptures by the Holy Ghost in a way that brought rich meaning to them—and to us. Many of the things Lehi teaches here—and much more—were restored by Joseph Smith in his inspired translation of Genesis 50.

3:1 **in the days of my greatest sorrow.** Lehi did not explain his great sorrow in detail—was it the difficulty of the journey, the rebellion of his older sons, or something else? Whatever it was, Joseph’s birth came at that point in time. That he named him Joseph had to do with his study of the brass plates, as he explains.

3:3 **thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed.** We can be assured that Lehi’s prophetic statement came to pass, though the seed of Joseph is never mentioned in the Book of Mormon. But they are surely among us today, perhaps many of them members of the Church.

3:5 **Joseph truly saw our day.** Lehi saw in Joseph’s prophecies on the brass plates a direct fulfillment in his family. They were “a righteous branch” broken off but remembered by the Lord.

3:6 **A seer...a choice seer.** I have always wondered when Joseph Smith realized this was about him. Was it when he and Oliver were doing the translation in 1829? Or was it later as the Spirit continued to teach him about his mission in the latter-days? Whenever it was, it had to be a humbling experience, to know that ancient prophets had testified specifically of you.

3:9 **great like unto Moses.** Joseph Smith was great like Moses in many ways—in priesthood power, in teaching truth, in bringing forth scripture, in gathering Israel, and more.

3:11 **bring forth my word...convincing them of my word.** The Book of Mormon came forth among men by the power of God to (among other things) convince the world “that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true” (1 Nephi 13:39).

3:12 **shall grow together.** Compare Ezekiel 37:15-20.

3:17 **Moses...a spokesman.** Moses was not mighty in speaking, but had Aaron to support him. The actual account in Exodus differs from the Charlton Heston image we have of Moses—Aaron did most of the talking to pharaoh.

3:18 **make for him a spokesman.** Joseph is comparing Moses and his spokesman, Aaron, to the latter-day prophet and his spokesman. Who was Joseph’s spokesman? In the early days of the Church, it was Sidney Rigdon. When Joseph Smith translated this, he had never met or probably even heard of Sidney.

2:24 **bringing to pass much restoration.** A perfect description of Joseph Smith’s mission.

2:25 **thou art little.** The tenderness and concern of Lehi comes out in this verse as much as any other in the account of his life.

2 NEPHI 4: NEPHI’S PSALM

Not all of chapter 4 is Nephi’s Psalm, but the beauty of it makes it the dominant feature.

4:1-14 LEHI’S FINAL WORDS AND DEATH

4:2 **there are not many greater.** Nephi had a great appreciation for Joseph’s prophecies, because they pertained so directly to him and his family: “he prophesied concerning us, and our future generations.” He probably could not have been more amazed to see himself portrayed in these brass plate passages than Joseph Smith was to read about his own mission in Nephi’s record.

4:3 **the children of Laman.** Lehi called his grandchildren to him next to give them final counsel.

4:4 Lehi quotes...himself (2 Nephi 1:20).

4:5 **ye will not depart from it.** These words of Lehi, who knew rebellious children, have brought great comfort to many parents. Said Brigham Young: “Parents—you who continue to live the life of true Christians, and are filled with faith, virtue, and good works, I promise you, in the name of Israel’s God, that you will have your children, and no power can rob you of them; for all will be saved, except the sons of perdition. If they go to hell, you will have the privilege of dragging them from there, if you are faithful” (JD, 7:336).

4:8-10 Lehi gave the same blessing to the sons of Lemuel, then (probably) to the sons of Ishmael.

4:11 **he spake unto Sam.** Sam gets very little attention in the Book of Mormon, but Lehi’s words demonstrate his faithfulness and blessings.

4:12 **Lehi...died, and was buried.** It doesn’t say how long it was after the blessings in the previous chapters until Lehi’s death, but it was probably a fairly short time. The loss of Lehi must have had a huge impact on the company, but especially on Nephi who relied on his father for so much.

4:13-14 Trouble came up almost immediately after Lehi’s death, and Nephi “was constrained” to remind them of Lehi’s words and things on the scriptures. But the older brothers had already made up their minds.

4:15-35 NEPHI'S PSALM

4:15 ***my soul delighteth in the scriptures***. Nephi's scriptures were, of course, the brass plates, what we would call the Old Testament. If that was the only scripture we had, how powerfully could we make the same statement?

4:16 ***my heart pondereth continually***. Nephi not only meditated on the scriptures but on the things the Lord had revealed to him personally. That would have been much harder had he not written them down. Do we write down the things the Lord reveals to us?

4:17 ***O wretched man that I am!*** Though it's been many years since Lehi died and since he's broken away from his brothers, founded his own kingdom, and more, Nephi still feels the emotion of that time as he writes about it. He also is super humble, seeking to root out every sin in his life and saddened that he still has any.

4:19 ***I know in whom I have trusted***. This is the transition phrase—from sorrow and grief for sin to praise and love for God, who is Nephi's sustaining power.

4:20-25 This is a marvelous summary of Nephi's life experiences.

4:27 ***why should I yield to sin***. It's hard to imagine what Nephi's sins might have been, given what we know. But he gives the best hint in this verse (and in v. 29): "Why am I angry because of mine enemy?"

4:31 ***make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin***. See quote from Elder Dallin H. Oaks, *Institute Manual*, p. 60.

4:35 ***God will give me, if I ask not amiss***. Compare D&C 88:63-65.

1 NEPHI 5: NEPHITES AND LAMANITES

5:1-4 Nephi made his case—his brothers tried again to take away his life, resenting his leadership.

5:5 ***the Lord did warn me***. Like his father, Nephi was warned by the Lord when it was time to leave and go into the wilderness.

5:6 Nephi's group of supporters consisted of: 1) Nephi and his family; 2) Zoram and his family; 3) Sam and his family; 4) Jacob and Joseph (presumably too young to marry at this point); 5) Nephi's sisters (number unknown, and what about their families?); and, 6) "all those who would go with me". The last category is intriguing—who else would it be? It seems at least possible that they had already encountered other people and some of them choose to go with Nephi.

5:7 ***journey in the wilderness for the space of many days***. The exact distance is not known, but they apparently traveled upland from the coast where they first settled in to the wilderness for quite some time.

5:8 ***we should call the name of the place Nephi***. The city of Nephi became the lands of Nephi's descendents until the time of Mosiah (king Benjamin's father) when they fled north to the land of Zarahemla and joined with the people there—about 300 years.

5:12-14 **plates of brass...compass...sword of Laban**. Somehow Nephi had managed to escape his brothers with all of these things. Perhaps the older brothers didn't value them and thus care, and Nephi certainly had claim to the sword.

5:14 **the people who were now called Lamanites**. Another hint of the merging of cultures. If it was just Laman, Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael and their families, that's not much of a "people" who would need a name. Nephi also has "people" who follow him—sounds like larger groups than just their families.

5:15 Nephi taught everything he knew about construction and metal work.

5:16 **I, Nephi, did build a temple**. Not as glorious as Solomon's temple which he knew (as did Sam and Zoram and perhaps his sisters), but with the same idea—a place to worship the Lord.

5:18 Nephi reluctantly accepted the title of king over his people.

5:20 **they were cut off from his presence**. Nephi already saw the fulfillment of the Lord's words in the lives of his brothers.

5:21-23 **skin of blackness**. We don't know the nature of this change—how it happened, what it looked like, etc. But its purpose was to make the Lamanites "loathsome" unto Nephi's people. But see the longer explanation in the *Institute Manual*, p. 62.

5:26 **did consecrate Jacob and Joseph**. The younger brothers are given authority to teach and lead.

5:27 **after the manner of happiness**. What a great phrase! See President Gordon B. Hinckley's quote in the *Institute Manual*, p. 61-62.

5:28 **thirty years had passed away**. This date is when Nephi is commanded to make the small plates, which we have been reading. Since we don't know the exact year Lehi left Jerusalem, we don't know this year either, but something close to 566-565 is probably about right.

5:30 **make other plates**. The small plates of 1 and 2 Nephi.

5:34 **forty years had passed away**. About 556-555. Nephi would be about 56 years old when he wrote this date.

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