

YOUR STUDY OF

THE BOOK OF MORMON

• MADE EASIER •

FOR TEENS

PART ONE: 1
1 NEPHI
THROUGH
WORDS OF
MORMON

BOOKS BY DAVID J. RIDGES

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DAVID J. RIDGES

CFI

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THE JST REFERENCES IN STUDY GUIDES BY DAVID J. RIDGES

Note that some of the JST (The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible) references I use in my study guides are not found in our LDS Bible in the footnotes or in the Joseph Smith Translation section in the reference section in the back. The reason for this, as explained to me while writing curriculum materials for the Church, is simply that there is not enough room to include all of the JST additions and changes to the King James Version of the Bible (the one we use in the English speaking part of the Church). As you can imagine, as was likewise explained to me, there were difficult decisions that had to be made by the Scriptures Committee of the Church as to which JST contributions were included and which were not.

The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible in its entirety can generally be found in or ordered through LDS bookstores. It was originally published under the auspices of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Independence, Missouri. The version of the JST I prefer to use is a parallel column version, Joseph Smith's "New Translation" of the Bible, published by Herald Publishing House, Independence, Missouri, in 1970. This parallel column version compares the King James Bible with the JST side by side and includes only the verses that have changes, additions, or deletions made by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

By the way, some members of the Church have wondered if we can trust the JST since it was published by a breakaway faction from our Church. They worry that some changes from Joseph Smith's original manuscript might have been made to support doctrinal differences between us and the RLDS Church. This is not the case. Many years ago, Robert J. Matthews of the Brigham Young University Religion Department was given permission by leaders of the RLDS Church to come to their Independence, Missouri, headquarters and personally compare the original JST document word for word with their publication of the JST. Brother Matthews was thus able to verify that they had been meticulously true to the Prophet's original work.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Book of Mormon Made Easier for Teens (and adults who would like a bit more help studying the Book of Mormon). These three study guide volumes combined contain every verse in the Book of Mormon. So, as you read and study, you will be reading the entire Book of Mormon word for word.

This study guide series was written for you. It is designed to help you learn to see applications in your own life from what you are reading and learning in the Book of Mormon. That way, it will be more interesting for you to read and study.

One of the things that typically stands in the way of understanding the scriptures is the vocabulary and overall language used in the scriptures. And so, I am going to help you learn “Scriptureze,” or, in other words, the language of the scriptures, as we go along. In effect, you will learn a new language. Especially at first, I will define many words as we come to them. As you get to the point that you no longer need some of the words defined, you can ignore my definitions, realizing that you are actually making good progress in learning the language of the scriptures.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that we can get closer to God by living according to the teachings of the Book of Mormon than through any other book. The exact quote is, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” (See Book of Mormon, Introduction, paragraph 6.) So, there is probably nothing more valuable that you can do than to read and study the Book of Mormon.

The difference between this version and the regular Book of Mormon Made Easier study guides published several years ago is that these three volumes have many more definitions of scriptural terms that can be difficult for younger readers and also for many adults. They also contain a number of additional explanations of the teachings and principles taught in the Book of Mormon, and some longer and more technical notes and commentary have not been included.

You will see as we go along that I have used bold for many words and phrases. You can use this as a guide to mark your own scriptures with colored pencils,

or highlight them if you are using digital scriptures. Also, you will see that by marking certain key words and phrases in a verse, you can, in effect, make brief notes as to what the verse is about. Later, as you re-read and study your Book of Mormon, you can glance at a verse and quickly see what it is about because of what you have marked in it.

Most important of all, the Book of Mormon is true. It is the word of God. And it is a sure way to bring the Spirit into your heart and mind whenever you choose to read and study it.

—David J. Ridges

THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI

1 NEPHI 1

As you first meet Nephi, when he introduces himself here in chapter one, you might be like many readers who tend to think of him as probably in his teens as he is writing this. He probably was in his teens as these events took place—in other words, when his father, Lehi, took his family and fled from Jerusalem, about 600 years before the birth of Christ. But Nephi is probably actually in his fifties as he is writing this now. If you were to check his writings in 2 Nephi 5:28–33, you would find that it has already been thirty years since they landed in America. Also, since it was eight years from the time the family left Jerusalem before they even got on their ship to sail to America (2 Nephi 17:4), Nephi has to be somewhere in his fifties at the time he is writing what we see here in chapter one.

The point is, Nephi is a mature adult at the time he is writing this to us, and he is looking back at what took place many years ago, in his young life, as he shares with us his thoughts. He is picking out things he feels would be important to teach us from his own life's experiences. For example, look at verse one, next, and see if you can pick out important messages he

wants you to learn from what he is writing.

Also, just a reminder that Jerusalem, at the time in history referred to here, is a very wicked city located in the country of Israel at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, north of Egypt, in the tops of the mountains.



Let's join Nephi now as he introduces himself to us.

I, NEPHI, having been born of goodly parents [*“goodly” is an Old Testament word meaning praiseworthy, noble, or morally good, according to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*], therefore **I was taught** somewhat **in all the learning of my father**; and **having seen many afflictions** [*troubles*] in the course of my days [*during my life so far*], **nevertheless, having been highly**

avored [*greatly blessed*] **of the Lord** in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries [*basic doctrines of the gospel*] of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

What did you pick out? Did you see that he appreciates and respects his parents? Did you notice that, even though he had had “many afflictions,” he chooses now to emphasize that he had been “highly favored of the Lord in all my days”? In other words, he is an optimist. He chooses to emphasize the positives in his life. This is a major message for us from his writings.

For perspective, we might just take a quick look at a few of the “many afflictions” in Nephi’s life up to this point. He was nearly murdered four times by his own brothers (1 Nephi 7:16, 1 Nephi 16:37, 1 Nephi 17:45, 2 Nephi 5:4). Laban tried to kill him and his brothers (1 Nephi 3:25). They spent eight difficult years in the wilderness. He had much opposition in building the ship (1 Nephi 17), plus being tied up on the ship (1 Nephi 18). And after they arrived in America, his brothers again tried to kill him (2 Nephi 5:2–4).

By the way, don’t forget that the Holy Ghost is THE teacher for us as we study and apply the Book of Mormon to our lives. He

will prompt and teach you constantly as you study this sacred volume of scripture. And remember, experience has shown that it really helps to start each session of your study of the Book of Mormon with a prayer, asking Heavenly Father for help in understanding and applying the Book of Mormon to your personal life. You may also wish to end your study session with a prayer, expressing gratitude for what you have learned and the feelings you have had.

Next, Nephi tells us what language he uses as he engraves his history on the metal plates and also bears testimony to us of the truthfulness of what he writes. One of the wonderful and important things here is that the Holy Ghost can also bear testimony to us of the truthfulness of Nephi’s testimony. This witness can come to us in many ways, including as feelings in our hearts, impressions and emphases in our minds, peace, clarity of thinking—for example, a simple clear impression that Nephi is right!

2 Yea, **I make a record** [*a written history*] **in the language of my father**, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.

3 And **I know that the record which I make is true**; and I make it with mine own hand;

and I make it according to my knowledge.

Next, Nephi will mention Zedekiah, king of Judah, which includes the area around Jerusalem in southern Israel. This is about 600 BC, meaning that it is about 600 years before the birth of Christ. King Zedekiah is a wicked, twenty-one-year-old king (see 2 Kings 24:18–19). He will reign for eleven years, during which time, among other evil deeds, he will imprison the prophet Jeremiah in a miserable dungeon with deep mud (see Jeremiah, chapters 38–39). Finally, after Lehi and his family have been run out of Jerusalem by angry mobs, King Zedekiah will be captured by King Nebuchadnezzar's forces, from Babylon, about 587 BC. Zedekiah's sons (except for Mulek) will be killed before his eyes, and he will be blinded and carried as a prisoner to Babylon (basically where Iran and Iraq are today). (See 2 Kings 25.) Somehow, Mulek will end up in America, and we will meet his descendants in Omni 1:14–15, Mosiah 25:1, and elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.

Next, we see that the Lord is warning the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem and the surrounding area that they will be destroyed unless they repent.

4 For it came to pass [*Now this is what happened*] in the commencement

[*the beginning*] of the first year of the reign [*rule*] of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt [*lived*] at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year **there came many prophets** [*including Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*], **prophesying** [*teaching about the future*] **unto the people that they must repent**, or the great city Jerusalem must be [*would be*] destroyed.

5 Wherefore [*therefore*] it came to pass that **my father, Lehi**, as he went forth **prayed** unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of [*for*] his people.

In verses 6–16, next, you will see that Nephi's father, Lehi, was indeed a great prophet. We will underline and **bold** words and phrases in these verses to show you this.

6 And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, **there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before** [*in front of*] **him; and he saw and heard much**; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly [*a whole lot*].

7 And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself [*lay down*] upon his bed, being

overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen.

Next, in verse 8, we run into an interesting phrase which causes some readers to ask, “Why doesn’t it come right out and say that Lehi saw God, rather than saying that he thought he saw God?” The answer is simple. In order to avoid even the slightest chance of using the name of God inappropriately (like people nowadays constantly using “god” as a swear word and so forth), ancient prophets sometimes used the “polite indirect” reference rather than using “God” outright. Lehi did see God the Father, but in writing about it, Nephi uses the indirect “thought he saw God.” We see other examples of this indirect mode in the scriptures. For instance, in Abraham 3:24, Abraham refers to the premortal Christ as one “that was like unto God.” In Daniel 3:25, Christ is referred to as “like the Son of God.” In Revelation 1:13, Jesus is referred to as “one like unto the Son of man.”

8 And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was **carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God** [*he saw Heavenly Father, compare with Revelation 4:2*] **sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels** [*more angels than you could*

possibly count] **in the attitude of singing and praising their God.**

9 And it came to pass that **he** [*Lehi*] **saw One** [*Christ*] **descending** [*coming down*] **out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster** [*brightness*] **was above that of the sun at noon-day.**

Next, Lehi will see in vision the future Twelve Apostles following Christ.

10 And **he also saw twelve others following him** [*the Savior*], and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament [*the sky*].

11 And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and **the first** [*Christ, see verse 9*] **came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read** [*told him to read the book*].

12 And it came to pass that as he read, **he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.**

13 And he read, saying: Wo, wo, [*bad things are coming*] unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations [*terrible wickedness*! Yea, and **many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem— that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish** [*die*] **by the sword,**

and many should be carried away captive into Babylon [*a powerful enemy nation with headquarters about 500 miles east of Jerusalem*].

14 And it came to pass that when **my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things**, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer [*allow*] those who come unto thee [*the righteous*] that they shall perish!

15 And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God [*these are the kinds of words my father used to praise God*]; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him.

16 And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account [*a complete record*] of the things which my father hath written, for **he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied** and

spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account.

17 But **I shall make an account of** [*tell about*] **my proceedings** in my days [*make a history of my life*]. Behold, I make an abridgment [*a shortened version*] of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands [*this brief summary of his father's writings goes through 1 Nephi chapter 8*]; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life.

Next, Nephi tells us that, after his father was given the tremendous revelations mentioned in the previous verses, he started preaching to the Jews and warning them what would happen if they did not repent. Pay attention to how the inhabitants of Jerusalem reacted to his message from the Lord to them.

18 Therefore, I would that ye should know [*I want you to know*], that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, **Lehi**, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he **went forth among the people, and began to prophesy** and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

19 And it came to pass that **the Jews did mock** [*make fun of, laugh at*] **him** because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations [*extra bad wickedness*]; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book [*mentioned in verse 11*], manifested [*showed*] plainly of **the coming of a Messiah** [*meaning “a deliverer,” one who would set them free, in other words, Christ*] and also the redemption of the world [*the saving of the world by Christ through His Atonement*].

20 And **when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him**; yea, even as with the prophets of old [*in the past*], whom they had cast out, and stoned [*threw rocks at them until they died*], and slain [*killed*]; and **they also sought his life**, that they might take it away [*tried to kill Lehi*]. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance [*Nephi will show us that the Lord will show great and tender mercy to all who have faith in Him and will give them power to be saved*].

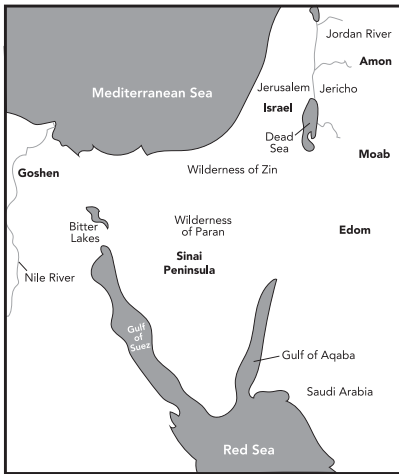
1 NEPHI 2

In this chapter, Lehi is warned by the Lord to take his family and flee into the wilderness—in other words, to quickly get away from his enemies in the Jerusalem area and go into the barren desert areas southeast of the Holy Land. Lehi is a wealthy man, and this will involve leaving his wealth and worldly possessions behind. You will see that two of Nephi’s older brothers, Laman and Lemuel, are unhappy about leaving their comfortable lifestyle in the Jerusalem area and will complain a lot. Some readers are inclined to ask why Lehi didn’t just leave Laman and Lemuel home, rather than being subjected to the problems they continued to cause. While Lehi and his wife, Sariah, are best qualified to respond to this question, perhaps we may venture a few responses. First of all, faithful parents continue to hope that wayward children will repent, and they often do. Another facet of the answer may be that in each family, it is not just the wayward or rebellious members who need to learn lessons, but the faithful members also have the need to grow in patience, wisdom, forgiving, striving to bring them back, etc., and to learn countless other attributes that Heavenly Father wants us to gain.

1 FOR behold, it came to pass that [*Now this is what happened*] **the Lord spake** [*spoke*] **unto my father**, yea, even in a dream, and said unto him: Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which

thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people [*told these people*] the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to take away thy life [*and, as you can see, they now want to kill you*].

2 And it came to pass that **the Lord commanded my father**, even in a dream, **that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness** [*the desert-like area southeast of Jerusalem*].



3 And it came to pass that **he was obedient** unto the word of the Lord, wherefore [*and so*] he did as the Lord commanded him.

Next, in verse 4, watch what Lehi has to leave behind as he obeys the Lord's command to get out of Jerusalem quickly. What does that tell you about him?

4 And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And **he left his house**, and the land of his inheritance [*the land and property he had received from his father*], and **his gold**, and his **silver**, and his **precious things**, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions [*food and supplies*], and tents, and departed into the wilderness.

Did you notice how many times “and” is used in verse four, above? It is used ten times. Your school teacher would probably not give you a passing grade on a homework paper you wrote if you used “and” so many times, rather than mostly commas. The use of “and” like this in the Book of Mormon is strong evidence that it is translated from an ancient Near Eastern (Jerusalem area) language in which they used “and” instead of commas (think the gold plates that Joseph Smith received from Moroni).

5 And **he came** down by the borders **near the shore of the Red Sea** [*180–200 miles or 290–320 kilometers from Jerusalem*]; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with **his family**, which consisted of my mother, **Sariah**, and my elder [*older*] brothers, who were **Laman, Lemuel, and Sam**.

We know that Nephi's parents are still young enough to have more children because they will have two more sons (Jacob and Joseph) plus daughters during the time they travel in the wilderness. See 2 Nephi 5:6.

6 And it came to pass that when **he had traveled three days** in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water.

7 And it came to pass that **he built an altar** of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, **and gave thanks unto the Lord** our God.



The building of an altar and giving an offering to the Lord in verse 7, above, is a reminder that Lehi and his family worshipped God according to Old Testament laws and ceremonies given to the people by the prophet Moses (see, for example, Exodus 20:24–26). The Book of Mormon people

will continue to keep the Old Testament law of Moses until the Savior appears as recorded in 3 Nephi and gives them the higher laws of the New Testament.

8 And it came to pass that he called the name of the river, Laman, [*this was quite an honor given to Laman*] and it emptied into the Red Sea; and the valley was in the borders near the mouth thereof.

9 And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea [*probably one of the source rivers of the Red Sea*], **he spake** [*spoke*] **unto Laman**, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness [*always living righteously*]!

10 And **he also spake unto Lemuel**: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!

We can sense from Lehi's wishes expressed to Laman and Lemuel in verses 9 and 10, above, that he is worried about them and wants them to know their potential for good and faithfulness to God.

Next, Nephi will confirm that his father is worried about Laman and Lemuel.

11 Now this he spake [*said*] **because of the stiffneckedness** [*lack of humility and unwillingness to obey*] **of Laman and Lemuel**; for behold **they did murmur** [*complain*] **in many things against their father**, because he was a visionary man [*had visions and revelations from God*], and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish [*die*] in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart [*they didn't believe he had actually seen visions and had revelations from God*].

12 And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur [*gripe, complain*] against their father. And **they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them**.

The last sentence of verse 12, above, leads us to believe that Laman and Lemuel either did not want religion to get in the way of their lives much, if at all, or had already rebelled against religion at this point in their lives.

In fact, the first part of verse 13, next, says clearly that they did not believe the prophets.

13 **Neither did they believe that Jerusalem**, that great city, **could be destroyed** according to the words of the prophets. And **they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem**, who sought to take away the life of my father.

The last half of verse 13, above, leaves no doubt that Laman and Lemuel were already wicked and rebellious in their hearts. It says that they were just like the wicked Jews in Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that the Jews at that time were deeply involved in all kinds of wickedness, including sexual immorality (Jeremiah 5:7–8, 6:15, 9:2–3). This makes it easy for us to believe that Laman and Lemuel had several wicked friends back in Jerusalem and that they were mad about having to leave them and follow their father on what they considered to be a crazy and uncomfortable trip into the dangerous wilderness.

Next, Father Lehi is filled with the Spirit of the Lord and speaks so strongly that Laman and Lemuel are completely stopped in their complaining, and, in fact, they feel the Spirit so strongly that they shake with fear and don't dare say anything against their father.

14 And it came to pass that **my father did speak unto them** in the valley of Lemuel, **with power, being filled with the Spirit**, until their frames [*bodies*] did shake

before him. And he did confound them [*they were terrified*], that they durst not utter [*didn't dare speak*] against him; wherefore [*therefore*], they did as he commanded them.

One of the important lessons we learn from verse 14, above, is that the Lord loves everyone, even those who are wicked and rebellious, and gives them miraculous evidence that He exists so that they have a chance to repent.

15 And **my father dwelt in a tent.**

It may be that Nephi adds what is in verse 15, above, just to remind us that Lehi gave up wealth and comfortable living conditions back in the Jerusalem area in order to be obedient to the Lord's commandment to flee into the wilderness. It's a good reminder for us to give up our comforts and worldly things when necessary to follow what the Lord asks, such as going on missions, going to church on Sunday, paying tithing, participating in service projects, saying our prayers, ministering, and so forth.

16 And it came to pass that I, **Nephi**, being exceedingly [*very*] young, nevertheless **being large in stature** [*was already very big*], and also having great desires to know of the mysteries [*the basics of the gospel*] of **God**, wherefore, I did cry [*pray*] unto the Lord; and behold he **did visit me, and did soften my**

heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers.

There is an important lesson to learn from Nephi in verse 16, above. Some people ask whether it is wrong to doubt or wonder about matters related to the gospel. Given the fact that individual agency is a gift from God, the answer has to be "No." But it is wrong and foolish to rebel. It is what we do about doubts when they arise in our hearts that makes or breaks us. When doubts about their father and his visions, etc., arose in Laman and Laman's minds, they chose to murmur and rebel. A careful reading of verse 16 may indicate that Nephi also had doubts in his heart, because he tells us that the Lord "did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel . . ." Nephi's approach was different from that of his two older brothers. He had an honest heart, a great desire to know the basic truths and doctrines of the gospel, and a desire to know the truthfulness of what his father taught. He humbly prayed to the Lord until he received the sweet, reassuring answer about the truthfulness of his father's revelations. Thus, he had full ownership of faithfully following his prophet father.

17 And I spake unto **Sam**, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he **believed in my words**.

Sam is one of my favorite people in the Book of Mormon. I have tender feelings for him and hope to meet him some day. Though older than Nephi, he faithfully follows him and assists him. He reminds me of Hyrum Smith, Joseph Smith's older brother. Though they were older brothers, both Sam and Hyrum seemed to have the gift of believing the words of others (a gift of the Spirit spoken of in D&C 46:14). They both followed and faithfully supported their younger prophet brothers throughout the rest of their lives.

18 But, behold, **Laman and Lemuel would not hearken** [*listen*] **unto my words**; and being grieved [*worried*] because of the hardness of their hearts [*their rebellion*] **I cried** [*prayed*] **unto the Lord for them**.

19 And it came to pass that **the Lord spake unto me**, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently [*made great effort to find Me*], with lowliness of heart [*with humility*].

20 And **inasmuch as** [*as long as*] **ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper** [*do very well, be greatly blessed*], and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands [*America*].

21 **And inasmuch as** [*if*] **thy brethren shall rebel** against thee, **they shall be cut off** from the presence of the Lord [*they will not get into heaven nor will they get His help now during their lives*].

There is quite an important lesson here for us. It may be that Nephi did not get the answer he wanted. He had obviously been praying for the salvation of Laman and Lemuel. Instead of being reassured that they would be saved, he is reminded that they have agency and their judgment on Judgment Day will depend on how they use it. However, in the next verse, he is reassured that if he, himself, continues to keep the commandments, he will be saved. Thus, we are reminded that we need to do all we can to save others, including praying continually for them. But we cannot force anyone to be saved in heaven against his or her agency.

22 **And inasmuch as** [*if*] **thou** [*you*] **shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy**

brethren [*this prophecy will be fulfilled as the Book of Mormon continues*].

23 For behold, in that day that they shall rebel against me, **I will curse them** even with a sore [*severe, heavy*] curse [*instead of blessings from Me, they will have much misery and trouble in their lives*], and **they shall have no power over thy seed** [*Nephi's posterity, children, grandchildren, etc.*] **except** [*unless*] **they shall rebel against me also.**

24 And **if** it so be that **they** [*Nephi's posterity*] **rebel** against me, they [*Laman and Lemuel's posterity*] shall be a scourge [*trouble*] unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance [*to encourage them to live the gospel and repent as needed*].

1 NEPHI 3

In this chapter, Lehi's sons will be commanded to go back to Jerusalem to get the brass plates of Laban. These plates contained the scriptures written upon thin metal plates made of brass (much more durable than parchment or scrolls). The writings included the first part of our Bible—the Old Testament up to the writings of the prophet Jeremiah—plus a record of Lehi's own genealogy, meaning his ancestors. Laban is a powerful and influential man in Jerusalem who is the keeper of these plates. He is most likely Lehi's relative and the one in the family who keeps

the family's genealogical records. The journey back through the dangerous wilderness to Jerusalem will be around 200 miles (or 320 kilometers) one way.

Remember, as Nephi comes back into camp, he has been in a very sacred, spiritual environment, having just finished speaking with the pre-mortal Jesus Christ (Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, at that time, who was still a spirit). He will be very well prepared for the commandment his father gives even though his older brothers are already complaining about it.

1 AND it came to pass that I, Nephi, returned from speaking with the Lord, to the tent of **my father.**

2 And it came to pass that he **spake** [*spoke*] unto me, saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that **thou** [*you*] **and thy** [*your*] **brethren** [*brothers*] **shall return to Jerusalem.**

3 For behold, Laban hath the record [*history*] of the Jews and also a genealogy [*record*] of my forefathers [*ancestors*], and they are engraven [*written with an engraving tool*] upon plates of brass.

4 Wherefore, **the Lord hath commanded me that thou** [*you*] **and thy** [*your*] **brothers should**

go unto the house of Laban, and seek *[ask for]* the records, and bring them down hither *[here]* into the wilderness.

Next, we see an important lesson for all of us. When the Lord's prophets ask us to do something, they are not the ones asking us to do it. It is the Lord asking us.

5 And now, behold **thy brothers murmur**, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold **I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord.**

6 Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of *[blessed by]* the Lord, **because thou hast not murmured** *[complained]*.

Verse 7, next, is one of the best-known verses in the Book of Mormon. In fact, many missionaries have it printed on their sacrament meeting program when they give their talk prior to leaving on their missions. I was one of them.

7 And it came to pass that **I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath *[has]* commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men *[people]*, save *[unless]* he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish**

[do] the thing which he commandeth them.

8 And it came to pass that **when my father had heard these words he was exceedingly *[very]* glad**, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord.

9 And I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey in the wilderness, with our tents, to go up to the land of Jerusalem.

An issue that students sometimes bring up as they study this chapter is the question, "Since the Lord knew that they would need the brass plates, why didn't He tell Lehi before they left the Jerusalem area, instead of having the boys go back 180–200 miles (over 300 kilometers), one way, through a very dangerous wilderness infested with robbers, murderers, and wild beasts?" One possible answer lies in the fact that mortal life is not just an existence for us. It is for our learning and development. In other words, it is a curriculum designed by God for us to help us learn to become like Him. Nephi and his brothers each had many opportunities for increased faith and testimony during the hardships on this trip. Some of them grew spiritually, and some did not.

10 And it came to pass that when we had gone up to the land of Jerusalem, I and my brethren

did consult one with another [*we discussed how to go about getting the brass plates*].

11 And **we cast lots** [*like drawing straws to see who gets the short straw, or rolling dice, and so forth*]**—who of us should go in unto the house of Laban.** And it came to pass that the lot fell upon Laman; and **Laman went in unto the house of Laban,** and he talked with him as he sat in his house.

Next, Laman asks for the brass plates and is no doubt shocked and scared by the false things Laban accuses him of and the threat he makes.

12 And he desired of Laban the records which were engraven upon **the plates of brass,** which **contained the genealogy of my father.**

13 And behold, it came to pass that **Laban was angry,** and thrust him out from his presence [*chased him out of his house*]; and he would not that he should have the records [*didn't want him to have the brass plates*]. Wherefore, he said unto him: Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay [*kill*] thee.

In addition to being shocked and scared, having to run for his life to get away, another thing that likely entered Laman's mind here is that Lehi and Nephi had both assured

them that this was a mission from the Lord. So, why wasn't it being successful? Why wasn't the Lord helping and protecting them? Why, instead of succeeding in the Lord's work, was he now in danger of losing his life? We will talk about this in a minute.

14 But **Laman fled** out of his presence, and told the things which Laban had done, unto us. And **we began to be exceedingly sorrowful** [*very sad and worried*], and my brethren were about to return unto my father in the wilderness.

First, based on the middle of verse 14, above, you can see that all, including Nephi, were very disappointed and worried by what had just happened. But watch now as Nephi calms down and begins exercising faith and fulfilling the the prophecy about him given by the Lord in 1 Nephi 2:22 (that he would be a leader over his brothers). He now very firmly tells them that they are not going back to their father until they have the brass plates. We also wonder if this and other situations where he would have to be exceptionally strong and capable physically might be why he told us, back in 1 Nephi 2:16, that he was extra big for his age.

15 But behold I said unto them that: **As the Lord liveth, and as we live,** we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until

we have accomplished [*done*] the thing which the Lord hath commanded us.

The phrase “As the Lord liveth, and as we live,” in verse 15 above, is the strongest way of saying something among the people of Nephi’s time. So, you can see that he is telling his older brothers that they will absolutely not go back without getting the plates and taking them back to their father.

Next, he is a bit gentler as he encourages them to do what the Lord asked them to do. He proposes another plan to get the plates.

16 Wherefore [*now*], **let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord**; therefore let us go down to the land of our father’s inheritance [*let’s go down to where we lived before father took us into the wilderness*], for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord.

Next, in verses 17–20, Nephi explains to his worried brothers why their father took them away from the Jerusalem area so quickly and what would have happened if they had not obeyed the Lord’s commandment to leave. In a very real way, he is bearing his testimony to them that he knows his father is a true prophet.

17 For **he knew that Jerusalem must be** [*would be*] **destroyed, because of the wickedness** of the people.

18 For behold, **they have rejected** [*refused to follow*] the words of **the prophets**. Wherefore [*therefore*], if my father should dwell [*were to live*] in the land after he hath been commanded to flee [*leave quickly*] out of the land, behold, he would also perish [*die*]. Wherefore, it must needs be that he flee out of the land. [*Therefore, it was absolutely necessary for him to leave Jerusalem quickly with us like he did.*]

19 And behold, it is wisdom in God that [*God knows why*] **we should obtain these records** [*the brass plates*], that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers [*in other words, having the written language of the brass plates will help keep our language from changing*];

20 And **also that we may preserve** unto them **the words** which have been spoken by the mouth of **all the holy prophets**, which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time. [*In other words, we need the scriptures so that we can teach our families the word of God.*]

21 And it came to pass that after this manner of language did I persuade my brethren, [*these are the kinds of words I used to show my brothers why we had to get the brass plates*] that they might be faithful in keeping the commandments of God.

22 And it came to pass that we went down to the land of our inheritance [*down to where we used to live*], and **we did gather together our gold, and our silver, and our precious things.**

23 And after we had gathered these things together, **we went up again unto the house of Laban.**

Watch now as Laban's greed and true dishonest character come out as Lehi's sons bring all the family's great wealth to him in exchange for the brass plates.

24 And it came to pass that we went in unto Laban, and **desired him that he would give unto us the records** which were engraven upon the plates of brass, **for which we would give unto him our gold, and our silver, and all our precious things.**

25 And it came to pass that when **Laban** saw our property, and that it was exceedingly great, he **did lust after it** [*his greedy inner self showed strongly and he wanted it, no matter what*], insomuch that **he thrust us out**

[*drove us out*], **and sent his servants to slay us**, that he might obtain our property.

As you can see, Lehi and Sariah's sons now have to run for their lives. Imagine the terror that filled their souls. Things were not at all working out like they expected!

26 And it came to pass that **we did flee** before the servants of Laban, **and we were obliged to leave behind our property** [*we had to leave all our wealth*], and it fell into the hands of Laban.

So now Laban has all their money and precious things plus his servants are chasing them to kill them. No doubt, this is not what they thought a mission from the Lord was supposed to be like! However, they were young and were able to outrun Laban's servants and so they escaped. But Laman and Lemuel were sure mad!

27 And it came to pass that we fled [*ran*] into the wilderness, and the servants of Laban did not overtake us, and **we hid ourselves in the cavity of a rock** [*in a cave*].

28 And it came to pass that **Laman was angry with me, and also with my father; and also was Lemuel**, for he hearkened unto the words of Laman. Wherefore Laman and Lemuel did speak many hard words unto us, their