



BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<http://bookofmormoncentral.org/>



Religious Studies Center

<https://rsc.byu.edu/>

---

## Recovering the Missing Record of Lehi

Author(s): S. Kent Brown

Source: *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* Published: Provo, UT; Religious Studies Center, 2003

Page(s): 144-172

---



The Religious Studies Center is collaborating with Book of Mormon Central to preserve and extend access to scholarly research on the Book of Mormon. Items are archived by the permission of the Religious Studies Center.

<https://rsc.byu.edu/>

## ———— 10 ————

# RECOVERING THE MISSING RECORD OF LEHI

*S. Kent Brown*

The Book of Mormon teems with references to works known by its compilers and authors but not included in its final collection of texts. Documents comprising the plates of brass, for instance, are mentioned merely in passing.<sup>1</sup> Further, Mormon alludes to a substantial collection from which he distilled the nearly thousand-year history of his people.<sup>2</sup> These countless unnamed texts, moreover, do not include the so-called “sealed plates,” which formed part of what was entrusted to Joseph Smith but remained untranslated.<sup>3</sup> Among these accounts, the record of Lehi is singled out by name. It constituted, I propose, both a major source behind and an important influence on the writings of Lehi’s two literary sons, Nephi and Jacob.<sup>4</sup> In fact, a hint exists that Lehi’s record-keeping served as a model for scribes in later centuries.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a surprising amount of information exists that allows us to determine substantially the content and compass of Lehi’s record.<sup>6</sup>

As he opens his own story, Nephi announces that he is writing “a record of my proceedings in my days” (1 Nephi 1:1). But a few lines later, after reporting the divine calling of his father to be a prophet (see 1 Nephi 1:5–15), he adds this important notation: “I, Nephi, do not

---

*S. Kent Brown is a professor of ancient scripture and director of ancient studies at Brigham Young University.*

make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and . . . many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children. . . . But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father . . . ; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life" (1 Nephi 1:16–17). Thus, even though he intended to "make a record of [his] proceedings," Nephi introduces his own account with the news of his father's calling (see 1 Nephi 1:5–15), adding a note that he is abridging his father's record. According to verse 16—and this sets our agenda—this record includes (a) the notice of Lehi's prophetic call, (b) "things which he saw in visions and in dreams," and (c) "things which he prophesied and spake unto his children."<sup>7</sup>

### LEHI'S RECORD IN THE LARGE AND SMALL PLATES

It is important to notice that Nephi inscribed two records on metal plates: the first on the large plates of Nephi<sup>8</sup> and the second on his small plates,<sup>9</sup> each making use of his father's journal.<sup>10</sup> Concerning the large plates, Nephi recounts: "And upon the plates . . . I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father" (1 Nephi 19:1). Notably, this verse outlines the material found in 1 Nephi and in the first three chapters of 2 Nephi. To illustrate, (a) "the record of my father" corresponds roughly to 1 Nephi 1–10; (b) the "journeyings in the wilderness" appear in 1 Nephi 16–18, beginning with the discovery of the Liahona compass; and (c) the "prophecies of my father" would include 2 Nephi 1–3 and, possibly, 1 Nephi 10. This overall scheme is interrupted only by Nephi's dream (see 1 Nephi 11–15) and his discourse to the extended family (see 1 Nephi 19–22), both of which digress from the main story that focuses primarily on Lehi.

It was evidently after Lehi's death that Nephi began his second account—the small plates—which came to include the first six records of the Book of Mormon.<sup>11</sup> Nephi himself states: "I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my [large] plates . . . thus far.

"And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other

plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people.

"Wherefore, I, Nephi . . . went and made these [small] plates upon which I have engraven these things.

"And I engraved that which is pleasing unto God. . . .

"And if my people desire to know . . . the history of my people they must search mine other [large] plates" (2 Nephi 5:29–33).

According to this view, the books of 1 and 2 Nephi comprise Nephi's second record. In the case of this narrative, too, Nephi acknowledges that his father's work underlays its foundation; for only "after I have abridged the record of my father," Nephi affirms, "will I make an account of mine own life" (1 Nephi 1:17). Plainly it was Nephi's avowed purpose to incorporate parts of his father's work into this second composition.<sup>12</sup>

The structure of the early verses of 1 Nephi 1 shows Nephi's dependence on his father's account, preserving the opening of Lehi's record itself. As a matter of custom, ancient prophets introduced an account of their divine callings near the beginning of their records, coupling it with a colophon about the year of the reign of the local king<sup>13</sup>—precisely what we find in 1 Nephi 1:4–15. Directly after Nephi's opening remark about himself (see 1 Nephi 1:1–3) there is a notation that the story began during the first year of King Zedekiah's reign (see 1 Nephi 1:4). Next, as expected, we read of God commissioning the prophet (see 1 Nephi 1:5–15). But it is not the call of Nephi; it is Lehi's call.<sup>14</sup> In this light, I believe that Nephi inserted the opening of his father's book into 1 Nephi 1:4–15.<sup>15</sup>

## WHEN AND ON WHAT DID LEHI WRITE?

Lehi must have completed much of his record by the time Nephi began to write his first narrative: "Upon the [large] plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father" (1 Nephi 19:1). If so, when and how did Lehi's book come into existence? Clearly Lehi's account was already extant when Nephi inscribed it on the large plates. Further, someone apparently kept a journal, possibly on perishable material,

during the years that Lehi's family lived in the desert (see 1 Nephi 17:4). We turn now to evidence for these observations.

The report of the voyage of Lehi's family to the promised land appears in 1 Nephi 18, followed by Nephi's comment that he then manufactured plates for writing by smelting ore (see 1 Nephi 19:1–2).<sup>16</sup> By Nephi's account, he already possessed (a) the record of Lehi, (b) the genealogy of Lehi's fathers, and (c) an itinerary of the family's travels in the desert. Nephi, of course, could have obtained the genealogy from the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 5:16). But Lehi's narrative, including the desert wanderings, must have come from another source. It seems, then, that Lehi's account, basically complete when Nephi began his first record, served as one of Nephi's sources. Thus Lehi evidently was already composing his narrative while traveling in the desert and crossing the sea.

Another indicator of a running log of the family's travel experiences is that after relating Lehi's discovery of the compass in 1 Nephi 16:10, Nephi begins to narrate the family's trek by a series of "we" passages (see 1 Nephi 16:11–19, 33; 17:1–6).<sup>17</sup> These passages, narrated in first person plural, bear the marks of a summary of a diary-like record. That Nephi was evidently summarizing such an account appears in 1 Nephi 17:4 where, after mentioning the physical well-being that the family enjoyed in the desert (see 1 Nephi 17:2–3), he compresses his long story into a few words, "We did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness."<sup>18</sup>

We have no way of knowing what material Lehi originally used for record keeping. However, Lehi's fifth son, Jacob, makes an incidental remark that may shed light on this question as well as on the reason the Lord commanded Nephi to keep records on metal plates. After acknowledging the difficulty of inscribing on metal, Jacob says: "We know that the things which we write upon plates must remain; But whatsoever things we write upon anything save it be upon plates must perish and vanish away" (Jacob 4:1–2).

In this connection, it is worth noting that Nephi had obtained the brass plates before Jacob was born.<sup>19</sup> And Jacob must have noticed their durability since he could read and teach from them after he had

become a grown man. Consequently, his remark that writing “remains” when engraved on metal tablets no doubt derived from his own experience, as did his assertion that other types of material for writing “must perish and vanish away.” How had Jacob observed this? The most natural answer is that someone in his father’s family had written on non-metallic substances. Compared to the durability of the brass plates, these materials had evidently proven unsatisfactory for permanent records.<sup>20</sup>

Other hints, or the lack of them, suggest that Lehi initially kept his record neither on metallic plates nor on empty leaves (if any) of the brass plates. First, no reason appears for Lehi to carry engraving tools into the desert. It was only after he had left Jerusalem, in fact, that the Lord instructed him to seek custody of the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 3:2–4). Furthermore, the only item that Nephi seems to have brought later to his father from Jerusalem, along with the brass plates, was the sword of Laban (see 2 Nephi 5:14; Jacob 1:10). No tools are mentioned.<sup>21</sup> Finally, no account even hints that anyone in Lehi’s family smelted ore either for plates or for tools while living in the desert. On the contrary, they avoided kindling fires even for cooking (see 1 Nephi 17:2, 12). To be sure, Nephi possessed the skill to refine ore for metal plates, since after crossing the desert he crafted metal tools for constructing his ship (see 1 Nephi 17:16).<sup>22</sup> These observations, then, when coupled with Jacob’s note about nonmetallic writing substances, lead one to postulate that records kept in the desert were written on something other than metal, although we cannot be certain of the material.<sup>23</sup>

What can we distill from our discussion thus far? In the first place, Lehi’s record both served as a source for Nephi’s two accounts, those on the large and small plates, and specifically underlies most of the opening of 1 Nephi, a text from the small plates. Second, Lehi’s record was essentially complete by the time he and his family reached the land of promise, since Nephi employed it as a source for his annals on the large plates soon after arriving. Third, we surmise that Lehi initially wrote his narrative on a substance less durable than metal, and that it was Nephi who first inscribed it on metallic leaves when he recopied it onto his large plates.

## THE SCOPE OF LEHI'S BOOK ON THE SMALL PLATES

Our next task is to determine how extensively Lehi's account underlies 1 and 2 Nephi as well as Jacob's book. We shall first explore direct quotations and afterwards, passages that Jacob and Nephi appear to paraphrase from the account of their father. In this connection, two of the most important and lengthy quotations from Lehi are his portrayal of the vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8:2–28) and the report of his last instructions and blessings to his family (see 2 Nephi 1:4–3:25; 4:3–7, 9, 11).

*The quotations.* The vision of the tree certainly comes from Lehi's own record. The piece in 1 Nephi 8:2–28 stands in the first person singular, an important criterion. By the way Nephi introduces the story, he is obviously quoting from his father: "He [Lehi] spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream" (1 Nephi 8:2). Additionally, Nephi leaves no doubt as to when he ceases quoting Lehi and begins to paraphrase: "And now I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father. But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:29–30).

Concerning Lehi's last blessings and instructions to his family, there is some question whether they formed part of his record.<sup>24</sup> We cannot be entirely certain, chiefly because the scenes occurred close to Lehi's death. Of course, it is probable that not many years had passed between Lehi's arrival in the promised land (see 1 Nephi 18:23) and his death (see 2 Nephi 4:12).<sup>25</sup> During this period, Nephi had been keeping a record of his people on the large plates "thus far" (2 Nephi 5:29). Had Lehi also continued to write? If he had, we would expect him to include his last blessings and instructions; for, as Nephi tells us, "[Lehi] also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children" (1 Nephi 1:16), observations which fit Lehi's last blessings. Perhaps most significantly, the section of 2 Nephi comprising Lehi's last instructions exhibits the expected first person singular narrative. This characteristic, especially in such a long section, impels us toward the view that Lehi himself was responsible for the report. Of course, someone may have written Lehi's words as he spoke and, afterwards, Nephi

inserted them into the large plates.<sup>26</sup> Whichever the case, we should view Lehi's last words to his family as a continuation of what he had written simply because they match, according to Nephi's description, what Lehi had already recorded.

One other long quotation, preserved by Jacob, also came from Lehi's record. It lies in Jacob 2:23–33, a discussion of fidelity in marriage. After chastising his people for their pride (see Jacob 2:12–22) and then for their "grosser crimes," Jacob declares, "For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; . . . for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son" (Jacob 2:23). A quotation from the Lord begins in this verse and runs through verse 33. But who received these instructions? At first glance it appears that Jacob was repeating what he himself had received, since a few lines earlier he had written, "As I inquired of the Lord, thus came the word unto me, saying: Jacob, get thou up into the temple on the morrow, and declare the word which I shall give thee unto this people" (Jacob 2:11). Was Jacob carrying out the Lord's instructions by retelling what he had been told? Not really.<sup>27</sup> A more careful look at chapter 2 reveals that the counsel concerning one wife indeed came from the Lord but that Jacob was not the first to receive it. In fact, the recipient of these directions was Lehi. After the long quotation from the Lord (see Jacob 2:23–33), including Jacob's short commentary (see Jacob 2:27), we find this statement: "And now behold, my brethren, ye know that these commandments [concerning fidelity to one's wife] were given to our father, Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before" (Jacob 2:34). Therefore, as Jacob insists, it was Lehi who previously received "these commandments."

An equally compelling passage occurs a few lines later in which Jacob accusingly announces: "Behold, the Lamanites your brethren . . . are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandments of the Lord, which was given unto our father—that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them" (Jacob 3:5). Except for punctuation, this verse stood thus in the

printer's manuscript.<sup>28</sup> Every printed edition of the Book of Mormon has changed the word *commandments* in this passage to the singular, and, except in the 1981 edition, the word *father* has appeared as plural. Significantly, the printer's manuscript demonstrates unequivocally that these "commandments" were delivered to Jacob's father, Lehi. Consequently, we conclude that in Jacob 2:23–33 we find instructions that the Lord entrusted to Lehi. Jacob, in his sermon, quotes them to his hearers from Lehi's record, which "ye have known" (Jacob 2:34).

Other quotations likely from Lehi's record are shorter, and all occur in 1 Nephi.<sup>29</sup> We must use caution, however, in attributing these extractions to Lehi's record, since, because of their brevity, they may be based on the memory of one or another family member.

*The paraphrases.* As one might expect, the paraphrases from Lehi outnumber the quotations. With two exceptions (see 2 Nephi 1:1–3; Jacob 3:5), all of the restatements which may go back to Lehi's record turn up in 1 Nephi. The two visions associated with Lehi's call must of course be included since Nephi has apparently recast the account from first person to third person (see 1 Nephi 1:4–12, 13–14, 15). This report, as already noted, is sprinkled with direct quotations, presumably from Lehi's original narration (see 1 Nephi 1:13–14). Then follows Nephi's summary, which indicates that he is restating his father's chronicle: "And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams" (1 Nephi 1:16).

Much of chapter 2 may also depend on Lehi's narrative.<sup>30</sup> Mixed with these lines are Lehi's own words<sup>31</sup> as well as Nephi's observations both about his brothers' attitudes at having to leave Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2:11–13) and about a revelation that he himself received (see 1 Nephi 2:16–24). At the end of the summary from Lehi, Nephi concludes by saying, "And my father dwelt in a tent" (1 Nephi 2:15).

A third important paraphrase occurs in chapter 8, summarizing the remainder of Lehi's dream and his consequent exhortation to Laman and Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 8:30–33; 8:35–9:1). Nephi introduces this restatement by conceding that he cannot repeat "all the words of [his] father" (1 Nephi 8:29) and closes it thus: "And all these things did my

father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, . . . and also a great many more things, which cannot be written upon these [small] plates" (1 Nephi 9:1). Nothing in this verse states specifically that Lehi had written down what Nephi had just recapitulated. But Lehi's dream and the accompanying exhortations to his family fit so well with Nephi's description of his father's written work (see 1 Nephi 1:16) that I feel confident that all of chapter 8, except Nephi's inserted remarks, goes back to Lehi's record.

Another very important summary from Lehi's record stands in 1 Nephi 10:1–16, which Nephi prefaces in an unusual way: "And now I, Nephi, proceed to give an account . . . of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry; wherefore, to proceed with mine account, *I must speak somewhat of the things of my father*" (1 Nephi 10:1; emphasis added). After a synopsis of Lehi's prophecies to his sons about the coming Messiah and the scattering and gathering of the Nephites and Lamanites, Nephi concludes: "And after this manner of language did my father prophesy and speak unto my brethren, and also many more things which I do not write in this book; for I have written as many of them as were expedient for me in mine other book.

"And all these things . . . were done as my father dwelt in a tent" (1 Nephi 10:15–16).<sup>32</sup> Although Nephi does not claim here that he is paraphrasing Lehi's prophetic words from a written source, he does acknowledge that he already included them in his "other book" (i.e., the large plates), from which he likely took the material for 1 Nephi 10:1–16. Remembering that his father's record contained "many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children" (1 Nephi 1:16), it would be surprising indeed if Nephi were not ultimately dependent in this instance upon Lehi's own written account.

In his original record, this segment (1 Nephi 10:1–16), which sets out Lehi's teachings on the coming Messiah and the scattering and gathering of Israel, may well have continued the earlier account of his vision and exhortation to his sons (see 1 Nephi 8:2–9:1). Two observations are relevant. First, just a few lines separate these two longer sections (see 1 Nephi 9:2–6). Apparently Nephi's attention to "these [small] plates" in 1 Nephi 9:1 presented an opportunity to discuss them

briefly in verses 2 through 6 before resuming his father's account in chapter 10. Second, when we compare the content of these two units with the content of Nephi's own analogous dream of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11–14), it seems obvious that the two pieces belong together. Although it is not apparent from the narrative of Lehi's dream of the tree that the prophecies regarding Israel's destiny and the Messiah (see 1 Nephi 10:1–16) are parts of a whole, their connection becomes clear from Nephi's parallel dream. Hence we conclude that the discussion in 1 Nephi 9:2–6 stands between two sections which likely formed a unit in Lehi's narrative.

The last paraphrase requiring review is the desert itinerary (see 1 Nephi 16:11–17, 33; 17:1–6). To be sure, Nephi himself could have kept the log in the desert. One observation, however, inclines toward the view that the itinerary was Lehi's. Nephi mentions the desert journal twice in 1 Nephi 19:1–2. In verse 1, when itemizing sources for the large plates, Nephi lists "the record of my father, and also [the record of] our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father." It is worth noting that Nephi mentions the desert journal *between* items from Lehi. Only after naming the sources from his father does Nephi say, "And also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon [the large plates]" (1 Nephi 19:1). Verse 2 paints a similar picture. Here, too, Nephi itemizes the sources that he drew on when composing his record on the large plates: "the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness." Again Nephi has associated the "proceedings" of the desert period with his father's work. Consequently, the itinerary almost certainly came from Lehi's pen.

In sum, the following segments of 1 Nephi paraphrase Lehi's record: Lehi's two visions at the time of his call (see 1 Nephi 1:4–15), his departure into the desert (see 1 Nephi 2:1–10, 14–15), parts of Lehi's vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8:30–33; 8:35–9:1), his prophecies concerning Israel and the Messiah (see 1 Nephi 10:1–16), and the desert itinerary (see 1 Nephi 16:11–17, 33; 17:1–6). There are others shorter in length which almost all appear in 1 Nephi: Lehi's prophecies and subsequent rejection in Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:18–20), his

prophecies regarding the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 5:17–19),<sup>33</sup> Lehi sending for Ishmael and his family (see 1 Nephi 7:1–2), Nephi's interpretation of Lehi's words concerning Israel's destiny (see 1 Nephi 15:17–18),<sup>34</sup> the Lord's command to Lehi to move on and the accompanying discovery of the compass (see 1 Nephi 16:9–10),<sup>35</sup> and the revelation to Lehi by means of the compass (see 1 Nephi 16:25–27).<sup>36</sup>

## CHARACTER OF THE RECORD

To portray the content of Lehi's record is a formidable task, since we possess only fragments and summarized accounts. Consequently, we run the risk of overstatement or underestimation. But we can discern a tentative outline. So far, three ingredients have appeared: prophecies, visions, and teachings.

*The prophecies.* Concerning prophecies, Nephi informs us that his father included many among his writings (see 1 Nephi 1:16; 19:1). Although Lehi prophesied on several occasions about his family (see 1 Nephi 7:1), a unique opportunity presented itself when he blessed and instructed them before his death, assuring them that their posterity would survive to the last days (see 2 Nephi 1:1–4:12). With an eye to the future, Lehi mentions first the promised land “which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of . . . my children forever” (2 Nephi 1:5). Of course, dwelling in the land is conditional upon obedience to the Lord and His principles (see 2 Nephi 1:7). Sadly, Lehi prophesies of a time when his posterity will turn their backs on “their Redeemer and their God” (2 Nephi 1:10). In that day, he foresees, the Lord “will bring other nations . . . and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from [Lehi's descendants] the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten” (2 Nephi 1:11). Although this prospect grieves Lehi deeply, he acknowledges that the Lord's “ways are righteousness forever” (2 Nephi 1:19).

Even in the face of such gloomy prospects, Lehi beams a light on the divine pledge that the family's progeny will survive these most vexing times (see 2 Nephi 4:7, 9). He agrees with a vow made to Joseph of Egypt that God would preserve Joseph's offspring (see 2 Nephi

3:16), a promise recorded on the brass plates (see 2 Nephi 4:2). In fact, much of the prophetic radiance that Lehi draws from this Joseph promise (see 2 Nephi 3:6–21) shines on a special seer (see 2 Nephi 3:7, 11) who in the last days will carry the word of the Lord both to Joseph's seed through Lehi (see 2 Nephi 3:7) and to the house of Israel (see 2 Nephi 3:13).<sup>37</sup> Then Lehi prophesies to his own son Joseph that this seer will be “an instrument in the hands of God . . . and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass much restoration unto the house of Israel, and unto the seed of thy brethren” (2 Nephi 3:24).

One aspect of Lehi's prophecies about his descendants holds out the promise that their records will come forth to the world (see 2 Nephi 29:2). A similar assurance came to Joseph of Egypt, to whom the Lord declared regarding the seer: “I will give unto him that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins, unto the fruit of thy loins. . . . And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust” (2 Nephi 3:18–19).

Lehi simply obtained the same divine commitment awarded to Joseph—that his posterity's writings would cry out as if “from the dust” to others of his descendants (2 Nephi 3:19).

Because he knows the destiny of his progeny, Lehi compares his family to an olive tree whose branches have been broken off (see 1 Nephi 10:12–14; 15:12–13), a comparison tied to the prophet Zenos's allegory of the olive tree, also found in the brass plates.<sup>38</sup> In this allegory, the house of Israel is likened to an olive tree whose branches are removed and grafted elsewhere but eventually restored to the main trunk of the tree. Such a prophetic image had a deep influence on Lehi, for Nephi relates that his father spoke “concerning the house of Israel, that they should be compared like unto an olive-tree, whose branches should be broken off and . . . scattered upon all the face of the earth.

“Wherefore, he said it must needs be that we should be led . . . into the land of promise, unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord, that we should be scattered upon all the face of the earth” (1 Nephi 10:12–13). That these words were prophetic is evident in Nephi's

summarizing remark a few lines later: "After this manner of language did my father prophesy" (1 Nephi 10:15).<sup>39</sup>

The coming Messiah also enlivens Lehi's prophecies. Almost predictably, in his last blessings to his family, Lehi turns to the Messiah, illuminating His mission as Redeemer from the Fall, as Guarantor of human freedom, and as Mediator of eternal life (see 2 Nephi 2:26–28). An earlier prophecy about the Messiah played a role in Lehi's preaching in Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:19), the inspiration coming from his vision of a book (see 1 Nephi 1:8–14). In that vision, Lehi at first seemed not to recognize the "One descending out of the midst of heaven" whose brightness "was above that of the sun at noon-day" (1 Nephi 1:9), even though Lehi had been rather certain that he saw God "sitting upon his throne" earlier in the vision (1 Nephi 1:8). But this second figure who descended, followed by "twelve others," apparently remained unknown to Lehi until he began to read in the book brought to him: "The things which [Lehi] read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah" (1 Nephi 1:10, 19). At the same time, Lehi learned of the threatening destruction of Jerusalem because of the inhabitants' wickedness (see 1 Nephi 1:13).<sup>40</sup> This mournful outlook, along with the prediction of the Messiah's coming, formed the core of his prophesying to the people in the city (see 1 Nephi 1:19).

Lehi also accentuates the Messiah when he recounts his vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 10:4–11), much of his prophecy evidently growing out of this later vision. This vision of the tree, and of the Messiah and his forerunner, appears to considerably expand Lehi's knowledge of the Messiah's ministry in Palestine. In the earlier vision (see 1 Nephi 1:8–13), Lehi had learned of His coming for "the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19). But whether this prior occasion had taught Lehi more remains uncertain since Nephi offers only a sketchy summary (see 1 Nephi 1:14, 19). In contrast, Lehi relates many more specific details about the Redeemer in the later prophecy (see 1 Nephi 10:4–11) than we find in chapter 1.

It is worth making a point here concerning Lehi's expressions for the Messiah. Whether his words are paraphrased or quoted directly, Lehi never used the Greek title *Christ* when speaking of the Messiah,<sup>41</sup>

nor did he ever call Him *Son of God* or the like.<sup>42</sup> Only Lehi's sons Nephi and Jacob employed titles of this sort.<sup>43</sup> To be sure, Lehi would have known the designation *Son* from the works of Zenos and Zenock, whose works appeared on the brass plates.<sup>44</sup> But in the few quotations from these latter two prophets, whose works Alma also cited when speaking of the coming Messiah (see Alma 33:11, 13, 16), nowhere do Zenos and Zenock expand the title to *Son of God* or something related.<sup>45</sup>

Did Lehi know expressions such as *Son of God* and *Christ*? Concerning both the title *Christ* and the name *Jesus*, the answer is a definite no. According to 2 Nephi 10:3, an angel revealed the title *Christ* to Jacob only after Lehi's death, and Nephi makes use of this term only after narrating Jacob's experience (see 2 Nephi 11:4). In addition, Nephi writes the name *Jesus* for the first time only near the end of his second book (see 2 Nephi 26:12), and Jacob records it but once in the latter half of his work (see Jacob 4:6). Therefore, we can safely conclude that Lehi did not know these expressions. In the case of *Son of God* and related titles, we cannot be sure that Lehi did not know them, but at least he did not use them.<sup>46</sup>

*Visions and dreams.* Besides Lehi's prophecies, we know of seven of his visions and inspired dreams if we include the instructions given to him by means of the compass (see 1 Nephi 16:26–27). Nephi recounts that Lehi had included such in his record: “[Lehi] hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams” (1 Nephi 1:16). In this connection, Lehi himself admits that he was “a visionary man” (1 Nephi 5:4). Incidentally, Lehi saw little difference between the terms *dream* and *vision*.<sup>47</sup>

Lehi's earliest vision likely stood at the beginning of his own record. Nephi recounts that “as [Lehi] prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much. And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen” (1 Nephi 1:6–7).

That Lehi's experience constituted a vision grows out of the emphasis on what he saw. Remarkably, while Nephi repeats nothing of

the vision's content, it certainly must have included Lehi's calling as a prophet. And it is reasonable that some of the content of this vision coincided with what Lehi saw immediately thereafter in the vision of the book. Nephi possibly thought that juxtaposing the two visions would indicate corresponding content.<sup>48</sup> We come to this view when we realize that Nephi must have abbreviated as much as possible, owing to the difficulty of inscribing on metal plates.

Nephi opens his summary of Lehi's second vision, the vision of the book, by picturing what Lehi saw when he was caught away by the Spirit: "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 sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels" (1 Nephi 1:8).<sup>49</sup> Lehi then saw "One descending out of the midst of heaven" and "twelve others following him" (1 Nephi 1:9–10). Nephi continues, "The first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. . . . And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; . . . and many should be carried away captive into Babylon" (1 Nephi 1:11, 13).

This passage captures the warning of Lehi's vision: Jerusalem had become iniquitous and was to be ravaged. This warning, of course, formed the core of the messages of contemporary prophets at Jerusalem.<sup>50</sup> Although Nephi does not allude to it here, at some point Lehi had also learned about the approaching Redemption through the Messiah, for Nephi's tight summary of Lehi's later preaching reads: "And [Lehi] testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19).

In narrating his father's third vision, Nephi includes words of divine assurance as well as forewarning: "The Lord spake 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 the things which I commanded thee,

behold, they seek to take away thy life" (1 Nephi 2:1). In this same vision the Lord also charged Lehi to leave Jerusalem, the first step in a very long journey that would take him halfway around the world: "The Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 2:2). Lehi's response to this command eventually led him and his family to a distant land of promise: the Americas.

Lehi's fourth vision directs the return of his sons to Jerusalem for the record on the plates of brass (see 1 Nephi 3:2–6). Nephi quotes the very words of Lehi: "[Lehi] spake unto me [Nephi], saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.

"For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass" (1 Nephi 3:2–3).

Nephi and his brothers were to go to Laban and "seek the records, and bring them down hither" (1 Nephi 3:4). Notably, Lehi received this vision only after he and his family had established a base camp near the Red Sea (see 1 Nephi 2:5–9).

The fifth vision has to do with the tree of life and the Messiah (see 1 Nephi 8:2–28). As we have seen, this section preserves a long excerpt from Lehi's record. There were elements of the vision, however, that Lehi apparently left out.<sup>51</sup> The most notable illuminates the time of the Messiah's coming. Oddly, neither Lehi nor Nephi relates this detail in the accounts of their visions—at least not in the small plates. It is only afterward that Nephi brings up this particular while recollecting his vision (see 1 Nephi 19:7–10). Nephi speaks thus: "And behold [the Messiah] cometh, according to the words of the angel, in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem" (1 Nephi 19:8). If "the angel" in this passage (see 1 Nephi 11:14) is the same as the "man . . . dressed in a white robe" of Lehi's vision (1 Nephi 8:5)—and this seems apparent—then we can reasonably assume that Lehi had learned what Nephi learned concerning when the Messiah would come.

In my reckoning, the revelation written on the compass constitutes Lehi's sixth vision (see 1 Nephi 16:26).<sup>52</sup> On this occasion, Lehi had

prayed to know where Nephi should go to find food. In His response, the Lord chastised Lehi and his family for complaining because of their hardships (see 1 Nephi 16:24–25). Nephi then writes that “when my father beheld the things which were written upon the ball, he did fear and tremble exceedingly, and also my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and our wives” (1 Nephi 16:27). Like the Urim and Thummim among the ancient Israelites, the compass served as an important means of revelation.<sup>53</sup>

The last recorded vision is noted briefly in 2 Nephi 1:4, “For, behold, said [Lehi], I have seen a vision, in which I know that Jerusalem is destroyed; and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have perished.” That Lehi was granted a vision of the destruction of Jerusalem should not surprise us. Other prophets beheld the same.<sup>54</sup> For example, Lehi’s son Jacob recounts seeing “that those who were at Jerusalem . . . have been slain and carried away captive” (2 Nephi 6:8). And Ezekiel was transported in vision from Babylon to Jerusalem, where he witnessed the abominable practices of the priests and the consequent withdrawal of the Lord from the temple before the city fell (see Ezekiel 8:3–10:19).

*The doctrines.* Among the important doctrines taught by Lehi, in addition to those already noted, three stand out: fidelity in marriage, opposition in all things, and Adam’s role. Concerning fidelity to one’s spouse, Lehi linked this principle to the question of plurality of wives. Jacob, we recall, quotes at some length the relevant words of Lehi (see Jacob 2:23–26, 27–33). While the occasion when Lehi received this divine injunction remains unknown, according to Jacob the Lord had told Lehi that “this people<sup>55</sup> begin to wax in iniquity; . . . for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms” (Jacob 2:23). More to the point, people had sought “to excuse themselves” on scriptural grounds, “because of the things . . . written concerning David, and Solomon his son” (Jacob 2:23). God, through Lehi, was very emphatic that no “man among you [shall] have save it be one wife” (Jacob 2:27) unless God Himself reverses this commandment: “For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people” (Jacob 2:30). What had angered the Lord in Jacob’s day was having “seen the sorrow,

and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people . . . because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands" (Jacob 2:31). In Lehi's account of it, fidelity to one's marriage partner was so crucial to his family's presence in the promised land that, if not observed, God would soundly curse "the land for their sakes" (Jacob 2:29).

A second significant teaching of Lehi elucidates the doctrine of opposition in all things. As part of his last instructions to his son Jacob (see 2 Nephi 2), Lehi testifies that God's final judgment leads either to "punishment which is affixed" or to "happiness which is affixed" (2 Nephi 2:10). He then reasons, "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness; neither holiness nor misery" (2 Nephi 2:11). Lehi further maintains that without opposition we have no power to be righteous or unrighteous. We note the dramatic result that Lehi says would ensue: "And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation" (2 Nephi 2:13). According to Lehi, then, the totality of existence would cease if opposition disappeared. He repeats this perception in different terms: "All things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. Wherefore, it must needs have been created for . . . naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation" (2 Nephi 2:11–12).

The stance that all existence would be utterly wasted if no antithetical relationships existed leads Lehi to say: "Wherefore, this thing [no opposition] must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God" (2 Nephi 2:12). Since Lehi has just previously been dealing with the coming Redemption through the Messiah (see 2 Nephi 2:6–10), we should probably understand this doctrine in terms of the Redeemer's work. That is, if no opposition exists, there is no reason for a Redeemer who can bring about God's mercy *and* justice.

A third element of Lehi's teaching ties into his concerns about the

role of the Redeemer and about opposition in all things—the role of Adam in the drama of salvation (see 2 Nephi 2:15–27). Lehi insists that two ingredients were joined together in Adam’s situation—a choice along with the freedom to make that choice: “It must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life. . . .

“Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself” (2 Nephi 2:15–16).

For Lehi, the opposition facing Adam was necessary so that the choice could be made—the forbidden fruit versus the tree of life. In fact, had Adam not been enticed to make the choice that brought both mortality and the capability of parenthood, the earth would never have been peopled, thus frustrating God’s plan:

“And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. . . .

“And [Adam and Eve] would have had no children. . . .

“Adam fell that men might be” (2 Nephi 2:22–23, 25).

The whole point is that if Adam had not fallen, the human race would never have existed. But since he did fall, “the Messiah cometh . . . that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever. . . .

“To choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:26–27).

The reasons for opposition, then, are (a) to perpetuate existence—and Adam’s fall led to this—and (b) to bring about God’s plan, which is to save us through the Messiah’s redemption.<sup>56</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In summary, a strong case exists for the argument that Lehi’s written record underlay much in the writings of Nephi and Jacob. The most persistent problem, of course, is whether a particular quotation or paraphrase indeed goes back to Lehi’s written source. Naturally, Nephi’s brief characterizations of his father’s writings (see 1 Nephi 1:16; 19:1–2) enable us to grasp important clues regarding the nature of

Lehi's work. Yet in the final analysis we can be certain about only a portion; the rest remains merely suggestive. Far from being a futile exercise, however, our review has made it abundantly clear that Lehi's writings and teachings deeply impressed his sons Nephi and Jacob, a fact which allows us to assess with increased accuracy the positive influences of Lehi, the man and the prophet.

---

## NOTES

1. These included, for instance, the books of Moses and Jeremiah's prophecies (see 1 Nephi 5:11–14; Alma 18:36).

2. See, for example, Words of Mormon 1:3–11; Mormon 4:23; 6:6.

3. See Ether 4:1–7; 5:1; see also 2 Nephi 27:6–10.

4. In an article entitled "Nephi's Outline," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (winter 1980): 131–49, Noel B. Reynolds argues that a literary framework undergirding the first book of Nephi takes the form of a chiasmatic balancing of themes throughout. While it may be possible that Nephi indeed succeeded in doing what Reynolds says he did, I believe it possible to demonstrate (a) that Nephi utilized Lehi's record as the basis for his own, and (b) that Nephi included a brief outline—a virtual "table of contents"—of his historical narrative in 1 Nephi 19:1.

5. About five hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem, during a transfer of sacred records from King Mosiah to Alma, Mosiah charged Alma to "keep a record of the people, handing them down . . . even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem" (Mosiah 28:20), revealing a tie between the tradition of keeping records and the name of Lehi.

6. As with any study of literary sources, difficulties persist. The major problem is how to distinguish written reports from oral communications, an issue not easily solved in every instance affecting Lehi. On the one hand, we can be certain that Nephi and Jacob appealed to a written source (a) when they say they have done so and (b) when they quote their father at some length, cases which clearly point to an extant document. On the other hand, we may in fact be dealing with oral reports when a written source is neither mentioned nor apparently quoted extensively. While bearing this in mind, I shall deal with the Lehi materials as if they were largely derived from his written record unless reasons exist for understanding them otherwise.

7. As observed in 1 Nephi 1:16, Lehi's record apparently did not include

much, if anything, from Lehi's brief ministry in Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:18–20). Concerning prophecies, as Nephi details them, Lehi's writings contained primarily those which were directed to his family, "his children."

8. The relationship between (a) the large plates of Nephi, (b) the book of Lehi which was translated by Joseph Smith and then lost (see the first edition of the Book of Mormon [E. B. Grandin of Palmyra, N.Y., 1830, p. 1]), and (c) the remainder of the Book of Mormon has been graphically worked out most recently by Grant R. Hardy and Robert E. Parsons, "Book of Mormon Plates and Records," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:195–201. The book of Lehi, translated by Joseph Smith, consisted of an abridgment by Mormon of the record begun by Lehi's son Nephi (ca. 590 B.C.) and continued by succeeding scribes virtually down to the era of King Mosiah (ca. 130 B.C.). Aside from employing his name honorifically, this work apparently was not written in any part by Lehi and thus does not come within the purview of this study.

9. See 1 Nephi 19:1–2. Discussions appear in George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1962), 1:194; Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 16, 43, 282; and Eldin Ricks, *Book of Mormon Commentary*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1953), 226.

10. Others have also noticed that Nephi employed Lehi's written account when compiling his own. For instance, Sidney B. Sperry suggests that the nine opening chapters of 1 Nephi were based upon Lehi's record, Nephi's personal work beginning only with chapter 10 (*Compendium*, 94). Although the commentary compiled from the work of George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl expresses a similar view regarding the early chapters of 1 Nephi, it indicates that the division between the works of Lehi and Nephi occurs at the end of chapter 8 rather than chapter 9 (*Commentary*, 1:10; it may be important to note that Reynolds and Sjodahl did not collaborate to produce this commentary). In a discussion of the early segments of the Book of Mormon, Eldin Ricks basically adopts the position of Reynolds and Sjodahl (*Commentary*, 110). A close inspection of these and later chapters, however, indicates that these suggestions must be modified considerably since (a) Nephi includes important material in his opening chapters about himself and (b) both he and Jacob quote and paraphrase their father's words in later chapters.

11. Lehi's death is recorded in 2 Nephi 4:12, just before Nephi wrote that the Lord directed him to make the second, smaller set of plates (see 2 Nephi 5:30).

12. There remains the question why the "table of contents" for the large

plates (see 1 Nephi 19:1) seems to correspond so accurately to the content of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi 1–3, which derive from the small plates. It is clear thus far that Lehi's record underpins both works of Nephi. If only because Lehi's record is reported to underlie both accounts (see 1 Nephi 19:1; 2 Nephi 5:29–33), the "table of contents" for the large plates would, in my view, approximate the content of the small plates. Furthermore, since 1 Nephi 19:1 describes so plainly what we find in 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi 1–3, it seems thoroughly safe to maintain that the two records of Nephi roughly paralleled one another (see again 1 Nephi 1:16–17).

13. Jeremiah, for example, opens his book by mentioning the kings whose reigns his ministry spanned (see Jeremiah 1:2–3) just before the account of his call (see Jeremiah 1:4–10). Similar juxtapositions occur in Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; and Zechariah 1:1.

14. In fact, Lehi's call consisted of two visions that came in rapid succession. In the first, he had a surprising manifestation of a pillar of fire resting on a nearby rock, accompanied by a voice (see 1 Nephi 1:6). In the second, after returning home bewildered and fatigued by his first vision, Lehi saw the divine council as well as the coming Messiah, who brought him a book containing a prophecy of Jerusalem's fate (see 1 Nephi 1:8–15).

15. In addition, Nephi probably altered the opening account of Lehi's visions from first to third person. Nephi's narrative exhibits clear evidences of summarizing his father's report in at least two passages: (a) after a direct quotation in verse 13, Nephi outlines in verses 13 and 14 what his father had seen in the second vision; (b) verse 15 also forms a summary of what Lehi said (and sang) in response to his visions.

16. It may be argued that Nephi made the plates while still traveling in the Arabian wilderness, before coming to the ocean. In my opinion, however, the phrase "and it came to pass," found at the beginning of 1 Nephi 19:1, indicates that these events followed those recounted in chapter 18, since this expression in Hebrew serves to continue the story. Had Nephi smelted and fashioned this set of plates while still in the desert, he would doubtlessly have said so.

17. Sandwiched between these "we" passages are the accounts of how Nephi was able to find food after breaking his bow (see 1 Nephi 16:20–32) and of what occurred when Nephi's father-in-law, Ishmael, died (see 1 Nephi 16:34–39), incidents constituting digressions in the travel narrative.

18. The question naturally arises as to why I view the itinerary as the work of Lehi, not of Nephi. The matter cannot be decisively settled, for it remains possible that Nephi himself was largely responsible for the chronicle of "our journeyings in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 19:1). However, a review of the possibilities suggests that

Lehi was responsible for the desert itinerary. These are the options: (a) Lehi himself wrote the whole record (in this instance, the question would be solved); (b) Lehi dictated the record to a member of his family who served as scribe (in this case as well, the record would be attributed to Lehi); (c) Lehi directed Nephi or another family member to keep a desert diary (in this event, it is most probable that the record would reflect the name of the person who commissioned the work, that is, Lehi); (d) Nephi, with permission of and input from his father, wrote the wilderness record (to my mind, there is serious question whether the account would have been attributed to Nephi even in this instance, since it was a record of the desert wanderings of the family of Lehi, he being the patriarch); and (e) Nephi kept a diary in the desert without the knowledge of Lehi (a highly dubious proposition).

19. Nephi mentions only three other brothers when Lehi moved his family into the desert (see 1 Nephi 2:5). Later, in 2 Nephi 2:1, Lehi calls Jacob his first-born "in the wilderness," clarifying that Jacob was born after the departure from Jerusalem.

20. The use of impermanent writing materials for certain purposes seems to have continued in Nephite society, because some 450 years later King Mosiah hypothetically describes the actions of a wicked king who "*teareth up* the laws of . . . righteousness" (Mosiah 29:22; emphasis added). In addition, the observation that a name can be "blotted out" (Mosiah 5:11) may point to a use of ink, besides engraving tools for metals.

21. Whether Nephi or Lehi would have mentioned engraving tools, even if Nephi had brought them back from Jerusalem along with the brass plates, is certainly open to question. As illustration, the sword of Laban is not mentioned with the annotated list of the contents of the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 5:11–16)—even though Nephi brought it. Rather, it is noted in contexts widely removed from concerns for records and record keeping (see 2 Nephi 5:14; Jacob 1:10). It is also possible, though unlikely, that one of Lehi's family members may have acquired engraving tools along the way.

22. The problem for Nephi was not how to refine ore but where he should go to find it (see 1 Nephi 17:9–10). An intriguing though unprovable suggestion is that if Lehi's family traveled through the Aqaba region (at the northern tip of the east arm of the Red Sea), where ore has been refined for millennia, Nephi may have learned his smelting skills there. See Lynn M. and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 107, 110.

23. Ricks (*Commentary*, 227) suggests that "Nephi copied his father's record in its entirety from manuscript or scroll form to the durability of metal sheets." But he does not adduce any evidence.

24. It would be interesting to compare Lehi's last words to his family with the multiplying testamental literature which claims to record, in rather standardized ways, the last instructions of ancient patriarchs and prophets to their children. For recent studies on Lehi's last instructions, see Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989).

25. Sperry (*Compendium*, 151–52) observes that “we are told neither how old Lehi was at the time of his death nor how many years had elapsed from the time the party had left Jerusalem before he passed away. This we do know—that less than thirty years had passed away after the Nephites left Jerusalem before his death” (see 2 Nephi 5:28).

26. In 1 Nephi 2:9–10, Nephi relates that “when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness! 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!” Hugh W. Nibley, in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 268, maintains that “Nephi seems to have been standing by, for he takes most careful note of the circumstance. The common practice was for the inspired words of the leader to be taken down in writing immediately.”

27. On this occasion, in Jacob's discussion of pride, the other major topic (see Jacob 2:13–22), it does not once appear that he quotes directly what the Lord told him the night before (see Jacob 2:11). Instead, he paraphrases the Lord's words and intermingles his own observations with them. Only in verses 23–33 does he repeat directly the Lord's words, those pertaining to having one wife.

28. See Stanley R. Larson, “A Study of Some Textual Variations in the Book of Mormon Comparing the Original and Printer's Manuscripts and the 1830, the 1837, and the 1840 Editions” (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974), 95–96. The printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon was copied by Oliver Cowdery from the one originally dictated by Joseph Smith. The copy made by Oliver Cowdery was taken to the printer, E. B. Grandin, and became the basis for the first printed edition of the Book of Mormon. The original manuscript, written at Joseph Smith's dictation, is no longer extant for the passage in question (Jacob 3:5).

29. They consist of an extract that Lehi read from the book brought to him in the second vision of his call (see 1 Nephi 1:13), his exclamation at having read

this book (see 1 Nephi 1:14), words of the Lord spoken to Lehi in a dream (see 1 Nephi 2:1), Lehi's remark to his son Laman (see 1 Nephi 2:9) and the following comment to his son Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 2:10), his instructions to Nephi to return to Jerusalem for the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 3:2–6), Sariah's complaint against Lehi (see 1 Nephi 5:2) and his conciliatory conversation with her (see 1 Nephi 5:4–5), a further extract from Lehi's vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8:34), and what the Messiah's forerunner would say about the Messiah (see 1 Nephi 10:8).

30. 1 Nephi 2:1–10, and 14–15 all speak directly of Lehi.

31. See 1 Nephi 2:1, 9, 10.

32. This is the third time Nephi mentions that his father "dwelt in a tent." The earlier occurrences are in 1 Nephi 2:15 and 9:1. One is tempted to suggest that since these three instances all mark conclusions to sections wherein Nephi has summarized Lehi's record, Nephi may be using the phrase "dwelt in a tent" as a literary device to indicate a return to the narrative about himself. In support of this observation, I note that Nephi speaks of his father's tent twice more in 1 Nephi, the second instance underscoring my point. In the first case, Nephi merely relates that he returned there after his own vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 15:1). But in the second instance, Nephi's mention of the tent forms part of a clear literary transition between two segments of his narrative (see 1 Nephi 16:6). Compare Psalms 78:55, 60; also compare Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III*, Anchor Bible 17A (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 445.

33. It may well be that the "table of contents" of the brass plates (1 Nephi 5:11–16) also derives from Lehi's work.

34. We find several references to Lehi's dream as Nephi relates how he interpreted it for his brothers (see 1 Nephi 15:12–18, 21, 23, 26–30).

35. The commands to Lehi to move his camp may have derived from the itinerary (see 1 Nephi 2:2; 16:9; 17:44; 18:5).

36. The number of allusions to what Lehi did and said are too many to list and discuss. In most, it is impossible to determine whether we are dealing with matters from Lehi's annals. Many such references doubtless came from the memories of Nephi and Jacob.

37. The prophecy of Joseph came from the brass plates (see 2 Nephi 4:2). Lehi knew of other prophecies by Joseph since he speaks of "the prophecies which he [Joseph] wrote" (2 Nephi 4:2).

38. This allegory is quoted at length in Jacob 5. For studies on this important chapter, see Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds., *The Allegory of the Olive Tree* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994); Kent P. Jackson,

"Nourished by the Good Word of God," in *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 7: 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 185–95; and L. Gary Lambert, "Allegory of Zenos," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:31–32.

39. A similar point is made in 1 Nephi 15:12 as Nephi attempts to explain what Lehi meant. His brothers had not understood Lehi's comparison of themselves with the olive tree (see 1 Nephi 10:12–14). So Nephi declares to them "that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive-tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father; and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel, and are we not a branch of the house of Israel?" (1 Nephi 15:12). This is how the verse reads in the original manuscript, after adding punctuation. Beginning with the printer's manuscript and continuing through the printed editions of the Book of Mormon, an *s* had been added to the word *father*. The original manuscript clarifies that it was Lehi who was moved by the Spirit to apply the olive tree comparison to his family and posterity, and this sense is recognized in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon, where the singular spelling has been restored (see Larson, "Some Textual Variations," 59).

40. On the family learning of the fulfillment of this prophecy, refer to 2 Nephi 1:4 and 6:8.

41. The titles *Christ* (Greek) and *Messiah* (Hebrew) mean the same thing: "anointed." It is possible, of course, that Joseph Smith—while translating—used the title *Christ* in contexts which dealt with the word *Messiah*, but see notes 42 and 43.

42. The terms by which Lehi designates the Messiah are *Lamb of God* (1 Nephi 10:10); *Holy One of Israel* (2 Nephi 1:10; 3:2); *God* (2 Nephi 1:10, 22, 24, 26–27; 2:2–3, 10); *Lord God* (2 Nephi 1:17); *Holy Messiah* (2 Nephi 2:6, 8); *Messiah* (1 Nephi 1:19; 10:4–5, 7, 9–11, 14, 17; 2 Nephi 1:10; 2:26; 3:5); *Lord* (1 Nephi 10:8, 14; 2 Nephi 1:15, 19, 27); *prophet* (1 Nephi 10:4); *Savior* (1 Nephi 10:4); *Redeemer* (1 Nephi 10:5–6, 14; 2 Nephi 1:10; 2:3); *One* (1 Nephi 1:9); *Firstfruits* (2 Nephi 2:9); *Holy One* (2 Nephi 2:10); *Mediator* (2 Nephi 2:28).

43. Nephi and Jacob use several titles which apparently go beyond what they could have found in the brass plates, assuming the brass plates included the full Pentateuch and many of the prophets' writings (see 1 Nephi 5:11–13; 19:21–23). 1 Nephi 19:23 presents an interesting problem. In all the printed editions except the most recent, we find the reference "the book of Moses." The original manuscript has it "the books of Moses." When Oliver Cowdery copied down the manuscript for the printer, he accidentally made *books* singular. This misreading persisted until the edition of 1981 (see Larson, "Some Textual

Variations," 67–68). The following titles and names used by Nephi seem more at home in a later era such as that of the New Testament or early Christianity: *Beloved Son* (2 Nephi 31:11); *Beloved* (2 Nephi 31:15); *Son of the living God* (2 Nephi 31:16); *Son of righteousness* (2 Nephi 26:9); *Son of the most high God* (1 Nephi 11:6); *Son of God* (1 Nephi 10:17; 11:7, 24; 2 Nephi 25:16, 19); *Only Begotten of the Father* (2 Nephi 25:12); *Jesus* (2 Nephi 26:12; 31:10; 33:4, 6); *Jesus Christ* (2 Nephi 25:19–20; 30:5); *Christ* (2 Nephi 11:4, 6–7; 25:16, 23–29; 26:1, 8, 12; 28:14; 30:7; 31:2, 13, 19–21; 32:3, 6, 9; 33:7, 9–12); *true vine* (1 Nephi 15:15); *light* (1 Nephi 17:13). The following names from Jacob fit the same situation: *Only Begotten Son* (Jacob 4:11); *Christ* (2 Nephi 10:3, 7; Jacob 1:4, 6–8; 2:19; 4:4–5, 11–12; 6:8–9; 7:2–3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 17, 19); *Jesus* (Jacob 4:6).

44. In 1 Nephi 19:10–17, Nephi summarizes points from the writings of Zenock, Neum, and particularly Zenos. In verse 21 of that chapter he indicates that these teachings were on the brass plates (see also Alma 33:12).

45. It may be urged that in the Book of Mormon we have mere hints and glimpses from the writings of Zenock and Zenos and that, consequently, it is not possible to draw very firm conclusions. In my view, however, Alma brought together the passages from the writings of these two men which proved a point about the Son of God (see Alma 33:11, 13, 16). Zenos and Zenock called the Messiah *Son* whereas Alma called Him *Son of God* (see Alma 33:14, 17, 18, 22). Had Alma known of a passage in which either Zenock or Zenos mentioned the *Son of God*, he surely would have cited it to make his point to the Zoramites.

46. The first to adopt such a title was Nephi in his narration of how he had sought to receive the vision which his father had seen of both the tree of life and the Messiah. Curiously, as soon as Nephi inscribes the title *Son of God*, he adds the parenthetical explanation, "And the Son of God was the Messiah who should come" (1 Nephi 10:17). When did Nephi initially learn this title, especially since Lehi apparently did not use it? The only clear hint occurs at the beginning of his own parallel vision of the tree of life, which he begins narrating a few lines later, starting in chapter 11. On that occasion, he was told by the Spirit that after he had seen "a man descending out of heaven," he was to "bear record that it is the Son of God" (1 Nephi 11:7). In Nephi's account on the small plates, this is the first recorded notice of Nephi's having heard the title *Son of God* (he had apparently learned from the Spirit the expanded form—*Son of the Most High God*—just before this [see 1 Nephi 11:6]). It might be argued that Nephi knew such titles but had not utilized them in 1 Nephi until this point. Against this, I should point out that thus far, when speaking of the Messiah, Nephi had consistently employed the language of his father. Then in 1 Nephi 10:17, when he introduces the term

## RECOVERING THE MISSING RECORD OF LEHI

*Son of God*, he even adds a note of explanation. Since evidently the first person ever to mention that title to Nephi was the Spirit in the vision (see 1 Nephi 11:6–7), we are left to presume that before this experience Nephi did not know the term.

47. The term *dream* is clearly to be understood in the inspired sense. Of the seven dreams and visions of Lehi, three are called dreams (see 1 Nephi 2:1–2; 3:2; 8:2). In the final instance, Lehi himself equates dream with vision: “Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision” (1 Nephi 8:2).

48. Nephi’s employment of the phrase “saw and heard” (1 Nephi 1:19) may be intended to recall what Lehi “saw and heard” in the very first vision (the phrase occurs twice in 1 Nephi 1:6). If so, it becomes very likely that Lehi had learned about the coming Messiah in this first experience. It is impossible, however, to recover exactly how much was revealed to him concerning the Messiah on this occasion, since Nephi does not elaborate.

49. This type of vision forms the standard motif of the prophet or seer being introduced into the council of the Lord. Isaiah, for example, experienced this when he received his call (see Isaiah 6:1, 8; Jeremiah 23:18, 22; Revelation 4:2–4).

50. In 1 Nephi 1:4 we read that “many prophets” had come to Jerusalem “prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.” Among those prophets would have been Jeremiah, who had already been saying this for twenty-five years, and Habakkuk, who was prophesying and writing between 608 and 598 B.C. See also Zephaniah 1.

51. One item has to do with the condition of the stream of water, which Lehi had overlooked when he saw the vision. It was Nephi who, after recounting his experience with the corroborating vision, adds this curious note: “The water which my father saw was filthiness; and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water” (1 Nephi 15:27). When one examines Lehi’s narration, what Nephi says proves true. Lehi describes the water simply as “a river of water” (1 Nephi 8:13), not indicating whether it appeared muddy or clear. In contrast, Nephi is very explicit about its appearance, calling it “the fountain of filthy water . . . and the depths thereof are the depths of hell” (1 Nephi 12:16).

52. Incidentally, Nephi explains that “from time to time” writing would appear on the compass to give directions to Lehi’s family while still in the desert (1 Nephi 16:29).

53. In regard to the Urim and Thummim in Old Testament usage, see Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 28:6;

Ezra 2:63; and Nehemiah 7:65. See also Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Urim and Thummim," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1499–1500.

54. Nahum saw a similar vision of Nineveh under siege and finally falling (see Nahum 2:1–3:3, 10–15).

55. The revelation may have concerned people at Jerusalem or it may have concerned Lehi's extended family. If the latter, Benjamin's assertion that members of the traveling party "were unfaithful" (Mosiah 1:17) takes on a more focused meaning.

56. These three major elements of Lehi's instruction—fidelity to spouse, opposition as an essential ingredient of existence, and the Adam-Redeemer relationship in the plan of salvation—are supplemented by other less-emphasized themes which, when noted, exhibit a rich variety: Lehi's teachings on the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8:2–35), the fall of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:13, 19), the coming of the Messiah (see 1 Nephi 1:19; 10:4–11; 2 Nephi 2:6–9), the scattering and gathering of Israel (see 1 Nephi 9:3; 10:3, 12–14), and the important ministry of the seer of the latter days who is to take God's message to Lehi's descendants (see 2 Nephi 3:6–21).