1 Nephi Chapter 1

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Chapter 1

{Original 1830 Chapter I—comprising modern Chapters 1-5}

[Note: At least 30 years after leaving Jerusalem, and from the location of the land of Nephi in the Americas, Nephi begins this record (the "Small Plates") with an abridgment of the record of his father Lehi (see 2 Nephi 5:27-31).]

Nephi Sets Forth the Basis For Understanding His Record
Nephi Knew the "Mysteries" (the Covenant Way) of God
Nephi Knew that the Ancient Prophets Used Language
Culture & History to Convey Covenant Understanding

[Preface]

1 I Nephi

having been born _________________________ of goodly parents

therefore I [Nephi] was taught somewhat in ALL the learning of my father

and [I Nephi] having seen MANY afflictions in the course of my days

nevertheless having been HIGHLY favored of the Lord in ALL my days

[A] yea [I Nephi] having had a GREAT __________ (KNOWLEDGE) of the goodness

and [of] the mysteries of God

[B] therefore I [Nephi] make a ___ (record) of my proceedings in my days

2 [C] Yea I [Nephi] make a _____ record in the _______ (language) of my father

[D] which [record] consists of the ______ (learning) of the Jews

[C] and the ______ (language) of the Egyptians

3 [B] And I [Nephi] __________ KNOW

that the record which

I [Nephi] make is TRUE

and I [Nephi] make it [the record] with mine own hand [duality - hand = a covenant sign for truth]

[A] and I [Nephi] make it [the record] according to my KNOWLEDGE

* * *

[Note: It is intriguing that a personal testimony that the content of the Book of Mormon is “true” is given by each of the three major abridgers of the book: (1) by Nephi – 1 Nephi 1:3, 14:30, 22:30; (2) by Mormon – Alma 3:12, 3 Ne. 8:1; and (3) by Moroni – Ether 5:1-3, Moroni 10:4,29. In Ether 5:4 we find: “And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established . . . and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day.”]

[Par. aa – Like beginnings “I Nephi”]
[Par. cc – Circular repetition “record”]
[Heb. 01 – Hyperbole “ALL”]
[Par. bb – Contrasting lines]
[1 Nephi 1]

[Note: According to Raymond Treat (1988: 1) some of the above can also be arranged in chiastic or extended inverse parallelism. A simple outline with the pertinent parallel elements is as follows:

1  [A]  (knowledge)  [B]  (record)
2  [C]  (language)  [D]  (learning of the Jews)
   [C]  (language)
3  [B]  (record)  [A]  (knowledge)

~~~~Lehi Has Dwelt in Jerusalem All His Days
The Lord’s People Have Forsaken Their Covenants with Him
The Lord Warns Lehi & Other Prophets of Destruction

4 For **it came to pass** in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah.  
   my father Lehi having dwelt in Jerusalem in ALL his days and in that same year there came MANY prophets*
   prophesying unto the people [see Alma 37:30; Ether 7:23; 9:28; 11:1,12,20]
   that they [the people] MUST repent
   or the GREAT city Jerusalem MUST be destroyed

5 Wherefore **it came to pass** that my father Lehi—
   he [my father Lehi] went forth
   [he my father Lehi] prayed unto the Lord
   yea [he my father Lehi] [prayed] even____ with ____ ALL his heart in behalf of [ALL] his people

Lehi Sees a Pillar of Fire – Sees & Hears Much

6 And **it came to pass** as he [my father Lehi] prayed unto the Lord [upon a sacred mountain? Sinai? Exod. 19:18] there came a Pillar of Fire
   and [the Pillar of Fire] dwelt upon a rock before him

[Heb. 02 -- Initiator “And it came to pass”]
[Heb. 03 -- Noun & verb with the same root “proph——”]
[Par. dd -- Like beginnings “my father Lehi”]
[Heb. 04 -- Metaphor “pillar of fire”]
and he [my father Lehi] saw and heard MUCH
and because of the things which he [my father Lehi] saw and heard
he [my father Lehi] did quake and [he my father Lehi did] tremble exceedingly

7 And it came to pass
that he [my father Lehi] returned [to his own house at Jerusalem]
and he [my father Lehi] cast himself upon his own bed
being overcome with the Spirit
and [being overcome by] the things which
he [my father Lehi] had seen

Lehi Has Another Vision – God on His Throne
The Lord & the Twelve Come to Earth

8 and being thus overcome with the Spirit he [my father Lehi] was carried away [in the Spirit] in a dream*

even that he [my father Lehi] saw the heavens open
and he [my father Lehi] thought he saw God sitting [in the heavens] upon His [God’s] throne
surrounded with numberless concourses of angels—
in the attitude of singing
and [of] praising their God

[Note: “Attitude “ is archaic language for being in a position that implies an action or a mental state.]

9 And it came to pass
that he [my father Lehi] saw One[Christ] Descending Out of the Midst of Heaven

*And he [my father Lehi] beheld
that His [Christ’s] luster was above that of the sun at noon-day

[Heb. 05 – The use of the word “exceedingly”]
10 *and* he [my father Lehi] also saw Twelve Others [or Christ's Apostles] following Him and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

11 *And* they [the Twelve Others and Christ] came down and went forth upon the face of the earth.

[Note: The verbs “came” and “went” above are examples of what is called the “prophetic perfect” tense. This is when prophets that have viewed something in vision speak of it in the “past” tense as if to stress the point that it definitely will happen. The above statement has a duality to it that implies not only Lehi’s time, but the Meridian of time.]

**Christ Gives Lehi a Book Containing God’s Covenant Plan of Salvation**

*Lehi Reads It—*a Part Speaks of the Destruction of Jerusalem*

*and* The First [Christ] came and stood before my father Lehi.

*and* [The First–Christ] gave unto him [my father Lehi] a book and bade him that he [my father Lehi] should read [the book].

12 And it came to pass that as he [my father Lehi] read he [my father Lehi] was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. For I [Lehi] have seen thine abominations.

13 And he [my father Lehi] read saying [Quote] Wo wo unto Jerusalem.

Yea and MANY things did my father [Lehi] read concerning Jerusalem that it [Jerusalem] should be destroyed and [that] the inhabitants there of [Jerusalem] should be destroyed.

[and] MANY should perish by the sword and MANY should be carried away captive into Babylon.

[Note: There is duality here. While Babylon was a location, it also symbolized the captivity and depravity of Hell.]

14 And it came to pass that when my father [Lehi] had read and [had] seen MANY GREAT and marvelous things [P = saw] (AG) he [my father Lehi] did exclaim MANY [GREAT and marvelous] things unto the Lord such as [Quote] GREAT and marvelous are Thy works O Lord God Almighty.

[Par. ee– The use of many “and”s to connect lines] [Heb. 07 – Duplication = amplified] [Heb. 06 – The use of the “prophetic perfect” tense] [Heb. 08 – Plurals = amplified]
1 Nephi 1

Thy throne is high in the heavens and Thy power and Thy goodness and Thy mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth because Thou [O Lord God Almighty] art merciful and Thou [O Lord God Almighty] wilt not suffer those who come unto Thee that they shall perish.

Note: These quotes were apparently taken from the plates of Lehi, the translation of which was lost.

15 And after this manner was the language of my father [Lehi] in the praising of His God [Almighty] for his soul did rejoice and his whole heart was filled because of the things which he [my father Lehi] had seen yea [because of the things] which the Lord had shown unto him [P=shewn]

Note: Here a “soul” or “heart” substituting for what is meant ("Lehi") is an example of “metonymy.”

Nephi’s Record is an Abridgment of the Record of Lehi and an Account of His Own Life of Covenant Obedience

16 And now

A I Nephi do NOT make a full account of the things [Bookend] hh

B which my father [Lehi] hath written ii

B for he [my father Lehi] hath written MANY things

C which he [my father Lehi] saw in visions

C and which he [my father Lehi] saw in dreams

B and he [my father Lehi] also hath written MANY things

D which he [my father Lehi] prophesied

D and which he [my father Lehi] spake unto his children

A of which [things] I [Nephi] shall NOT make a full account [Bookend]
17. **But** [Bí] I [Nephi] shall _make an account_ of my proceedings in my _days_ [JJ]

**Behold** [Bí] I [Nephi] _make an abridgment_ of the _record_ of my father [Lehi] [C]

upon _plates_ which I [Nephi] have _made_

[C] [upon plates made] with mine own hands

**Wherefore**

after [that] [Bí] I [Nephi] have _abridged_ the _record_ of my father [Lehi] [deleted 1837]

then [Aí] will I [Nephi] _make an account_ of mine own _life_ [Editorial Promise]

[Adapted from Greg Wright (1976:2) and Donald Parry (1992:2)]

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**The Jews Mock Lehi for Declaring Covenant Disobedience and Prophesying Destruction**

18. **Therefore**

I [Nephi] would _that_ ye [plural] should _know_ that _after the Lord_ had _shown_ so _MANY marvelous things_ unto my father Lehi

yea _so MANY marvelous things_ concerning the _destruction_ of Jerusalem [duality]

[Note: Jerusalem represents a geographical locality, but Jerusalem also represents the location of the temple and thus the center of the covenant promise between the Lord and his covenant people.]

**Behold**

he [my father Lehi] _went forth_ among the _[covenant] people_

and [he my father Lehi] _began to prophesy_

and [he my father Lehi] _began to declare_ unto them [the _covenant_ people] _concerning_ the _things_

which he [my father Lehi] had both _seen_ and _heard_

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**Lehi’s Testimony of Christ Is Rejected and His Life Sought**

19. **And it came to pass**

that _the Jews_ did _mock_ him _because of_ the _things_

which he [my father Lehi] _testified_ of them [the _Jews_]

for [he my father Lehi] _truly_ _testified_ of _their_ _wickedness_ and _[of]_ _their_ _abominations_

[Par. jj – Chiastic or inverse parallelism]

[Heb. 12—Use of the word “Therefore” to initiate]

[Heb. 13—Use of the word “Behold” to initiate]
And he my father Lehi testified that the things which he my father Lehi saw and heard and also the things which he my father Lehi read in the book manifested plainly of the coming of A Messiah [the Redeemer of the world] and manifested plainly also [of] the redemption of the world

And when the Jews heard these things they the Jews were angry with him. [“my father Lehi] yea they the Jews were angry even as with *the prophets of old 16 17 whom they the Jews had cast out kk and whom they the Jews had stoned LL and whom they the Jews had slain

and they the Jews also sought his life [duality] that they the Jews might take it [his life] away

[Note: In the above statement, Nephi compares “my father Lehi “with “the prophets of old.” The circular repetition of the term “my father Lehi” emphasizes Lehi’s link with the “fathers” of old.” Additionally, the parallel structure shows, that “my father Lehi” is actually aligned with the prophets of old. This is an example of a Hebraism called “synecdoche,” but is better remembered as “a part that refers to or designates the whole.” That is, Lehi is an example of the “prophets.” But in turn, the prophets represented Christ, and proclaimed the coming of a Messiah, the Redeemer of the world. The Jews not only sought the life of the prophets, but they sought to destroy or “take away” the message of the coming of Christ—thus the duality. The words “of old” make the various prophets of any age “part of the whole.”

The circular repetition of “my father Lehi” also emphasizes that Nephi is abridging the Record of Lehi, and that the name Lehi is associated with the Abrahamic covenant – see the Introduction and the Commentary.]
[1 Nephi 1]

The Lord Will Deliver His Righteous Covenant People

But behold I Nephi will show unto you [covenant language – Nephi’s Intent] [IP = shewn] that the tender mercies of the Lord are over ALL those [IP = is over all them] (AG) whom He [the Lord] hath chosen because of their faith [in the Lord] to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance

[Note: Nephi has just given the definition of what constitutes a “chosen” people. It is available to ALL; it involves covenants with the Lord, faith in the Lord, and a will to do and be what the Lord commands them to do and be.]

[Note: According to Donald Parry (2007:2-3), 1 Nephi 1:15-18 is an example of a complex chiastic parallelism. A brief outline of the parallel phrases is as follows:

15  And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God for his soul did rejoice and his whole heart was filled because of the things which he had seen

B  the Lord had shown

16  C 1. I [Nephi] do not make a full account
    D 2. my father hath written
        3. hath written many things
        4. visions
        4' dreams
    3' hath written many things
    2' which he prophesied and spake

17  E 1' I [Nephi] shall not make a full account
    E' a. I [Nephi] shall make an account of my proceedings in my days.
        D' b. abridgment of the record
            c. I have made
            c' mine own hands
            b' abridged the record
    C' a' I [Nephi] make an account of mine own life

18  B' 1. the Lord had shown
    2. things
    3. people
    4. to prophesy
    4' to declare
    3' them
    2' things

A' 1' he had . . . seen