1 Nephi Chapter 16

Author(s): Alan C. Miner
Source: Step by Step Through the Book of Mormon, Volume 1: Through the Wilderness to the Promised Land
Published: Springville, UT; Book of Mormon Central/Cedar Fort, Inc., 2017
Pages: 131-142

Archived by permission of the author, Alan C. Miner
Chapter 16
{Original 1830 Chapter V—comprising Chapters 16 →19:21}

The Justice of the Lord’s Covenant Way Offends the Wicked
Humble Obedience Gives One Hope

[Note: In verses 1—>3 that follow, I have chosen to identify a parallelistic structure called “inclusion” or “bookends.” In this form the same phrase is repeated at both the beginning and at the end of a paragraph; and all that is in-between is “included” (see my Introduction). Donald Parry has identified this same section as a chiastic parallelism (2007: 34-35). I would remind the reader that when it comes to identifying parallelistic structure, two different perspectives do not always imply error, just a difference in point of view.]

1 And now
  
  it came to pass
  
  that after I Nephi had made an end
  
  of speaking to my brethren

  behold

  they [my brethren] said unto me

  *(Thou hast declared unto us

  HARD things)

  MORE than that

  which we [thy brethren]

  are able to bear


[A]  [initial beginning bookend]  aa


B

2 And it came to pass

  that I [Nephi] said unto them

  [Nephi] knew

  that I [Nephi] had spoken

  HARD things against the wicked

  according to the truth

  and the righteous have I justified

[C]

[D] and [that] I Nephi had testified

  that (they [the righteous] should be lifted up) at the last day

  (they [the righteous] should be lifted up at the last day)

  that (they [the righteous] should be lifted up) at the last day

  that (they [the righteous] should be lifted up) at the last day

  that (they [the righteous] should be lifted up) at the last day


[E] Wherefore

  the guilty taketh the truth

  to be HARD [to bear]

  for it ([the truth]

  cutteth them) [the guilty]

  to the very center

[Heb. 01 – Use of the phrase “made an end”]
[Par. aa – Inclusion or “Bookends”]

131
1 Nephi 16

3 And now __________ my brethren __________

[D] if (ye my brethren) were righteous __________
and [if ye my brethren] were willing to hearken
and [if ye my brethren were willing to] give heed unto it __________
[C] that ye my brethren might walk uprightly __________

[B] then ye my brethren would NOT _______ murmur __________
and [then] [ye my brethren would NOT] _______ say __________

[A] (Thou speakest HARD things against us) **

[Note: A simple outline of the parallel elements in Donald Parry’s proposed chiastic parallelism is as follows:

1 [A] (Thou hast declared unto us hard things)
2 [B] (the truth) __________
   [C] (righteous)
   [D] (they should be lifted up)
   [E] (the truth to be hard)
   [E] (it cutteth them)
3 [D] (ye were righteous) __________
   [C] (walk uprightly)
   [B] (the truth) __________
   [A] (Thou speakest hard things against us) (Parry:1992:28-29)
]

[Note: In the above verses (especially verse 2—“for it [the truth] cutteth them [the guilty] to the very center”) there is an allusion to the ancient covenant ceremony in which the penalties for breaking the covenant were symbolically demonstrated by an animal being CUT down the CENTER into two parts; whereupon the ones making the covenant would walk in between the cut parts, knowing very well at that point what their fate would be for breaking the covenant. I first learned of this practice from Raymond Treat in personal communication, but one can find it on the Internet at "Cutting a Covenant," Did You Know? Bible Studies by Brendon Wahlberg, Friday, November 21, 2008.]

4 And it came to pass that I Nephi did exhort my brethren __________

with ALL diligence __________

to keep the commandments of the Lord __________

[Par. bb – Circular repetition “ye my brethren”]
[Par. cc – Repeated alternating “if / then”]
[Par. dd – Chiastic or Extended inverted parallelism]
[Par. ee – Repetition “the Lord”]
5 And it came to pass that they [my brethren] did humble themselves before the Lord insomuch that I [Nephi] had joy of them [my brethren] that they [my brethren] would walk in the paths of righteousness Nephi Enters into the Covenant of Marriage Both Nephi & Lehi Have Kept Their Covenants with the Lord

6 Now ALL these things were said and done as my father dwelt in a tent which he [my father] called Lemuel

7 And it came to pass that I Nephi took one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife and also my brethren took of the daughters of Ishmael to wife and also Zoram took the elder / eldest daughter of Ishmael to wife

8 And thus [he] my father had fulfilled ALL the commandments of the Lord which [commandments of the Lord] had been given unto him And also I Nephi had been blessed exceedingly of the Lord

9 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord spake unto my father by night and [the voice of the Lord] commanded him that he [my father] should take his journey into the wilderness

[Heb. 02 – Separated prepositions “of” “of”] [Par. ff – Like endings “to wife”] [Par. gg – Repetition “into the wilderness”]
10 And it came to pass that my father arose in the morning and he went forth to the tent door to his GREAT astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.

11 And it came to pass that we did gather together whatsoever things which we should carry into the wilderness. And we did gather together ALL the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given unto us and we did take seed of EVERY kind that we might carry into the wilderness.

12 And it came to pass that we did take our tents and we did depart into the wilderness across the river Laman.

13 And it came to pass that we traveled for the space of four days nearly a south-southeast direction. And we did pitch our tents again and we did call the name of the place Shazer.

14 And it came to pass that we did take our bows and our arrows.

~~~ Lehi’s Group Travels to Shazer
And we did go forth into the wilderness to slay food for our families.

And after that we had slain food for our families, we did return again to our families in the wilderness, to the place of Shazer.

And we did go forth again in the wilderness following the same direction [south-southeast] keeping in the MOST Fertile Parts of the wilderness which [MOST Fertile Parts] were in the borders [♂= was] near the Red Sea.

And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of MANY days slaying food by the way [duality – “way” also = covenant way] with our bows and with our arrows and with our stones and with our slings.

And we did follow the directions of the ball [duality -directions] which [directions] led us in the MORE Fertile Parts of the wilderness.

And after that we had traveled for the space of MANY days, we did pitch our tents for the space of a time that we might again rest our selves and [that] we might obtain food for our families.

[Heb. 05 – Repetition of the preposition “with” and the possessive “our”]
[Par. hh – Enumeration list]
And it came to pass that as I Nephi went forth to slay food behold I [Nephi] did break my bow which [bow] was made of fine steel and after I [Nephi] did break my bow behold my brethren were angry with me because of the loss of my bow for we did obtain NO food.

And it came to pass that we did return WITHOUT food to our families and being MUCH fatigued because of their journeying [in the wilderness] they [our families] did suffer MUCH for the WANT of food.

And it came to pass that Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael did begin to murmur exceedingly because of their sufferings and [because of their] afflictions in the wilderness and also [he] my father began to murmur against the Lord His God yea and they were ALL exceedingly sorrowful [added in 1981] even that they did [ALL] murmur against the Lord yea and insomuch it began to be exceedingly difficult [1920] that we could obtain NO food.

[Par. ii – Circular repetition “food,” “bow”]
22 And **it came to pass**
that **I Nephi** did speak **MUCH** unto my brethren
because they had hardened their hearts again
even unto
complaining against **the Lord Their God**

23 And **it came to pass**
that **I Nephi** did make out of _______ wood
a **bow**
and **I Nephi** did make out of a straight stick
an **arrow**

**Wherefore** **I Nephi** did arm myself
with a **bow**
and with **an arrow**
and with **a sling**
and with **stones**

**And I Nephi said** unto **my father**

**Whither shall I go**
[to what place, result or condition] **(AL)**
to obtain **food**?
[duality – see note below]

**[Note: The implication or duality of what Nephi is asking his father is this: “According to the covenant patriarchal order, where do I go for spiritual “food” or counsel if my covenant father is murmuring?”]**

**Lehi Is Chastened For Murmuring**

24 And **it came to pass**
that **he my father** did inquire ______________ of **the Lord**

for they had humbled themselves
because of my **words / word**
[**^O / P**]

for **I Nephi** did say MANY _______ things unto them
in the energy of my soul

25 And **it came to pass**
that **the voice of the Lord** came
unto **my father**

**and he my father**

was truly chastened
because of his murmurings against **the Lord** [deleted in **P**]

**insomuch that he my father**

was brought down
into the depths of sorrow

[Par. jj – Enumeration list]
[Heb. 06 – Repetition of the possessive pronoun “with” ]
26 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord said unto him to look upon the ball and behold the things which are written upon the ball.

27 And it came to pass that when he my father beheld the things which were written upon the ball, he did fear and tremble exceedingly. And also my brethren did fear and tremble exceedingly. And the sons of Ishmael did fear and tremble exceedingly. And our wives did fear and tremble exceedingly. [Note: Nephi is the only one who did not fear and tremble because of what was written on the ball.]

Nephi Is to Assume Leadership (Be the "Ruler")

28 And it came to pass that I Nephi beheld the pointers which were in the ball. Then they did work according to the faith and diligence which we did give unto them. And there was also a new writing which was plain to be read and concerning the ways of the Lord. And it was written and changed from time to time.

29 And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.
[1 Nephi 16]

[Note: For an in-depth discussion on the various aspects of the “ball,” the “pointers,” and the “writing,” see Alan Miner, The Liahona: Miracles by Small Means, 2013.]

[Note: According to Donald Parry, the above verses can be arranged in chiastic parallelism. A simple outline of the chiastic elements that have been overlaid on my parallelism (note the bracketed letters and orange parentheses above) can be seen as follows:

28
[A] (pointers) mm
[B] (according to the faith and diligence)

29
[C] (written)
[D] (which was plain to be read)
[D] (which did give us understanding)
[C] (written)
[B] (according to the faith and diligence)

[A] (small means) (Parry:1992:30)

___________________________

[Note: By matching up “pointers” and “small means” Parry begins and ends his chiasm. This is not “wrong,” but it narrows the interpretation of this passage. In my structuring, “small means” is aligned with “the ball” and with “faith,” “diligence” and “heed,” and with “ways” of the Lord, and with “plain” writing. This expands the means of direction given. Rather than debate over who is correct, I find it nice when one kind of parallelism can be “overlaid” on another type of parallelism because it gives one greater perspective in appreciating the message (or messages) that is (or are) being conveyed in that passage of scripture. “Duality” is a constant part of the text of the Book of Mormon.]

~~~~ Nephi Goes to the Top of the Mountain to Obtain Food

30 And it came to pass that I Nephi did go forth up into the top of the mountain [duality – “mountain” = temple]
according to the directions [duality]
which were given ["was" – P] (AG)
upon the ball

31 And it came to pass that [A] I [Nephi] did slay wild beasts nn
insomuch that [B] I [Nephi] did obtain food
[C] for _________ our families

32 And it came to pass that [A] I [Nephi] did return to our tents bearing the beasts
which I [Nephi] had slain

and now when they beheld that [B] I [Nephi] had obtained food
[C] how GREAT was their [families'] joy

[Par. mm – Chiastic or Extended inverted parallelism]
[Par. nn – Extended alternating parallelism]

139
[1 Nephi 16]

And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before the Lord and they did give thanks unto Him the Lord.

[Note: I have structured the above verses according to the classical style for parallelism known as “extended alternating parallelism.” However, as I have continually demonstrated, the repetition and location of words and phrases can be accentuated in other ways. (See the previous passages (v. 17-24) using the terms “slay,” “obtain,” “food,” “families,” “return,” “humble,” etc.) What is more important to remember, however, is that the text is written in parallelistic patterns that lend themselves to the various perspectives.]

~~~ Travel to Nahom -- Ishmael Buried
Affliction Brings Anger and Discouragement
Laman & Lemuel Seek to Slay Lehi & Nephi

33 And it came to pass that we did again take our journey traveling nearly the same course [south-southeast] as [the course] in the beginning and after we had traveled for the space of MANY days we did pitch our tents again that we might tarry for the space of a time.

34 And it came to pass that Ishmael died and [Ishmael] was buried in the place which was called Nahom.

35 And it came to pass that the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly because of the loss of their father in the wilderness and because of their afflictions in the wilderness.

and they [the daughters of Ishmael] did murmur against my father because he had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem saying Our father is dead.

Yea and we have wandered MUCH in the wilderness [^3^= that] Our father is dead.

and we have suffered MUCH affliction pp

[Par. oo – Working out – the reasons that the daughters of Ishmael murmured]
[Par. pp – Many “and”s]
1 Nephi 16

[6] and we have suffered MUCH hunger

[7] and we have suffered MUCH thirst

[8] and we have suffered MUCH fatigue

And after ALL these sufferings we MUST perish in the wilderness with hunger

[9] and with thirst] [and with fatigue]

36 And thus they [the daughters of Ishmael] did murmur against my father

and also [they the daughters of Ishmael] did murmur against me

and they [the daughters of Ishmael] were desirous to return again to Jerusalem

[Note: This verse raises the chronological question of whether and to what extent Jerusalem had already been conquered by the Babylonians. One might ask, under what conditions would the daughters of Ishmael want to return to Jerusalem?]

37 And Laman said unto Lemuel and also [Laman said] unto the sons of Ishmael

Behold let us slay our father [Lehi] and also [let us slay] our brother Nephi

who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and [to be] our teacher

who are his elder brethren

38 Now he [Nephi says] that the Lord has talked with him and [he Nephi says] also that angels have ministered unto him

But behold [we know that he Nephi] lies unto us [they bear a false covenant witness] [he Nephi tells us these things]

and [we know that] he [Nephi] tells us these things [he Nephi tells us these things]

and [he Nephi worketh MANY things by his cunning arts]

that he [Nephi] may deceive our eyes thinking perhaps

[5] that he [Nephi] may lead us away into some strange wilderness

and after* he [Nephi] has led us away

[6] he [Nephi] has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us

[Par. qq – Doubling of words = greatly intensifying “hunger”]

[Par. rr – Working out – Laman’s false reasons for wanting to kill Nephi]

[Heb. 09 – Pronoun that is distant from the noun that it represents]
1 Nephi 16

that he [Nephi] may do with us according to his will and [his] pleasure

And after this manner [of language] did my brother Laman stir up their hearts to anger

Because They Are Obedient to Their Covenants
The Lord Will Deliver Lehi & Nephi
And Lead Them to the Promised Land

39 And it came to pass that the Lord was with us yea even the voice of the Lord came and [the voice of the Lord] did speak MANY words unto them and [the voice of the Lord] did chasten them exceedingly

and after* they were chastened by the voice of the Lord they did turn away their anger and [they] did repent of their sins

insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food that we did NOT perish [with NO“food”]

[Par. ss – Circular repetition of “the Lord”]
[Heb. 10 – Personification “voice” instead of “the Lord”]
[Par. tt – Repetition of “the voice”]