Chapter 17

{Original 1830 Chapter V – continued}

~~~ Eastward to Bountiful and the Sea Irreantum

1 And it came to pass that we did again take ______ our journey in the wilderness aa
and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth

And we did travel
and [we did] wade through MUCH affliction in the wilderness

and our women [wives] did bear children in the wilderness 01 bb

2 and so GREAT were the blessings of the Lord upon us [“P= was”] (AG)
that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness [sun-dried meat] 02

our women [wives] did give plenty of suck for their children

and [they our women] were strong yea even like unto the men
and they [our women] began to bear their journeyings without ^murmuring / s [^O / P ]

3 And thus we see that the commandments of God MUST be fulfilled
And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God (AG)
[then] He[God] doth nourish them cc
and [He God doth] strengthen them [^O / “ways and” deleted in P]

and [He God doth] provide ^ways [ways = covenant ways]
and means

whereby they can accomplish the thing which [thing]
He[God] has commanded them [see 1 Ne. 3:7] [^P= hath]

Wherefore
He[God] did provide ^ways
and means / means for us [^O / “ways and” deleted in P]
while we did sojourn ______________ in the wilderness

[Par. aa – Circular repetition “in the wilderness”] [Heb. 02 – Idiom “raw meat” = sun-dried with spices]
[Heb. 01 – Idiom “women” = wives] [Par. cc – Circular repetition “He God”]
[Par. bb – Circular repetition “women”]
And we did sojourn for the space of many years. Yea, even eight years.

And we did sojourn in the wilderness.

And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful because of its much fruit and also because of its much wild honey.

And all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish in the wilderness.

And we beheld the sea which we called Irreantum which being interpreted is many waters.

And it came to pass that we did pitch our tents by the seashore and notwithstanding we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea, even so many afflictions and so much difficulty, that we can not write them all.

When we came to the seashore and we called the place Bountiful because of its much fruit [and also because of its much wild honey].

Lehi’s group tarries at Bountiful. Nephi is to build a ship after the manner of the Lord that they may cross the many waters.
the voice of the Lord came unto ME saying [See the chiastic structure at the end of the chapter]

[A] Arise **
[B] and get thee into the mountain [duality – covenant temple]

And it came to pass

[A] that I[Nephi] arose
[B] and I[Nephi] went up into the mountain
and I[Nephi] cried unto the Lord

8 And it came to pass

that the Lord spake unto ME saying
Thou [Nephi] shalt construct a ship after the manner which [the Lord] shall show thee [IP = shew]
that [the Lord] may carry thy people across these waters

9 And I[Nephi] said [Extended alternating parallelism] [IP = saith]

[A] Lord
[B] whither shall I go
[C] that I[Nephi] may find ore to molten
[D] that I[Nephi] may make tools to construct the ship after the manner

which Thou [Lord] hast shown unto ME ?

10 And it came to pass

[A] that the Lord told ME
[B] whither I should go
[C] to find ore
[D] that I[Nephi] might make tools

11 And it came to pass

[A] that I[Nephi] did make a bellowses / bellows [O, IP / ^1837] (AG) **
[B] wherewith to blow the fire of the skins of beasts

[A] and after* I[Nephi] had made a bellowses / bellows [*IP = that]
[B] that I[Nephi] might have

wherewith to blow the fire

[Par. ** – Simple synonymous parallelism] [Par. gg – Circular repetition “the Lord”]
[Par. ff – Circular repetition “I Nephi”] [Par. ** – Simple synonymous parallelism]
[Heb. 05 – Compound preposition “up into”] [Par. hh – Circular repetition “fire”]
I [Nephi] did smite two stones together [duality]
that I [Nephi] might make fire [duality]

[Note: If one considers this a symbolic, dualistic verse, then there is an allusion to “fire” or revelation coming about by means of “two stones” which most probably would refer to the Urim & Thummim.]

12 For [He] the Lord had NOT hitherto suffered
that we should make MUCH fire
as we journeyed in the wilderness
for He [the Lord] said

13 And I [the Lord] will make thy food become sweet that ye cook it NOT *P = saith
and I [the Lord] will also be Your Light in the Wilderness [duality]
and I [the Lord] will prepare The Way before you

Wherefore

inasmuch as ye shall keep My commandments

and ye shall be led towards the promised land [duality – covenant]

that it is by Me

that ye are led

14 Yea and the Lord said also
that after ye have arrived to / in the promised land [O / 1920]

ye shall KNOW [*“arriven” (AG)]

that the Lord AM God

and that I [the Lord] did deliver you from destruction

yea that I [the Lord] did bring you out of the land of Jerusalem [duality]

[Note: By using the title “I . . . AM God”, Nephi makes allusion to the Lord delivering Moses and the Children of Israel out of the bondage and destruction of Egypt. When called to perform this task, Moses asked by what name he would claim authority. “And God said unto Moses, ‘I AM THAT I AM; . . . say . . . I AM hath sent me.’ ” (Exodus 3:13-14)]

15 Wherefore

I [Nephi] did strive

and I [Nephi] did exhort my brethren

[to “keep” = to “heed”]

[to faithfulness and [to] diligence

[Note: Here Nephi repeats what he recorded in 1 Nephi 16:28 that by these “small means” (faith, diligence and heed) the Lord “can bring about great things.”]
Covenant Faith Is a Mystery
Understood Only by the Righteous
Nephi’s Disobedient Brethren Bear False Witness

16 And it came to pass that I [Nephi] did make tools of the ore which I [Nephi] did molten out of the rock.

17 And when [they] my brethren saw that I was about to build a ship, they [my brethren] began to murmur against me saying,

Our brother is a fool for he thinketh that he can build a ship.

Yea and he [our brother] also thinketh that he can cross these GREAT waters in a ship.

18 And thus my brethren did complain against me and my brethren were desirous that they might NOT labor to build a ship.

For they [my brethren] did NOT believe that I could build a ship.

Neither would they believe that I was instructed of the Lord to build a ship.

19 And now it came to pass that I [Nephi] was exceedingly sorrowful because of the hardness of their hearts.

And now when they [my brethren] saw that I [Nephi] began to be sorrowful they [my brethren] were glad in their hearts insomuch that they [my brethren] did rejoice over me saying,

We knew that ye could NOT construct a ship.

For we knew that ye were LACKING in judgment.

Wherefore we know that thou canst NOT accomplish so GREAT a work as to build a ship.

[Par. jj – Downward gradation]
[Par. LL – Circular repetition “build a ship”]
[Par. kk – Circular repetition “my brethren”]
[Par. mm – Detailing “murmur”]
20 And thou art like unto our father Lehi led away by the foolish imaginations of his heart yea he hath led us out of the land of Jerusalem and we have wandered in the wilderness for these MANY years and our women have toiled being big with child and they have borne children in the wilderness And our women have suffered ALL things SAVE it were death and it would have been better that they died before they came out of the land of Jerusalem than to have suffered these afflictions

21 Behold these MANY years we have suffered in the wilderness which time we might have enjoyed our possessions and we might have enjoyed the land of our inheritance yea and we might have been happy

22 And we know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people For we know that they kept the statutes and the judgments of the Lord

[Note: The fact that they are complaining that they “might have” “enjoyed” or “been happy” in Jerusalem implies that Jerusalem had not been destroyed.] and we know that they kept ALL His commandments according to the law of Moses Wherefore we know that they are a righteous people [false covenant witness] and our father hath judged them [false] and our father hath led us away [false]

[Heb. 08 – Simile “like” comparison] [Par. nn – Detailing why Nephi is wrong] [Par. oo – Circular repetition “have”] [Par. pp – Circular repetition “our women”]
because we [his sons] would hearken unto his words

yea and our brother [Nephi] is like unto him [our father Lehi]

And after this manner of language did my brethren murmur and complain against us

[Note: The word “know” is a covenant word associated with covenant faith, obedience, perseverance and subsequent blessings by the Lord. Thus Nephi’s brethren are bearing false witness when they say “we know” because they lack the faith, the obedience, and the spirit of the Lord that would confirm the fact that they “know.”]

Nephi Compares His Trials with Those of Moses
He Condemns His Disobedient Brethren with Covenant Words
The Lord Will Destroy the Covenant Disobedient

23 And it came to pass that I Nephi spake unto them saying

Do ye believe that [they] our fathers who were the children of Israel would have been led away out of the hands of the Egyptians if they [our fathers] had NOT hearkened unto the words of the Lord?

24 Yea Do ye suppose that they [our fathers] who were the children of Israel would have been led out of bondage if the Lord had NOT commanded Moses that he [Moses] should lead them [the children of Israel] out of bondage?

25 Now ye know that the children of Israel were in bondage and ye know that they [the children of Israel] were laden with tasks which [tasks] were grievous to be borne

Wherefore ye know that it MUST needs be a good thing for them [the children of Israel] that they [the children of Israel] should be brought out of bondage

[Heb. 09 – Simile “like” comparison] [Par. vv – Circular repetition “bondage”]
[Par. tt – Questions to make a point] [Par. ww – Like beginnings “ye know”] [Par. uu – Circular repetition “have”]
Now ye know that Moses was commanded of the Lord to do that GREAT work and ye know that by his word the waters of the Red Sea were divided hither (AL) and thither and they [the children of Israel] passed through on dry ground.

But ye know that the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea who* were the armies of Pharaoh [p= which]

And ye also know that they [the children of Israel] were fed with manna in the wilderness.

Yea and ye also know that Moses by his word according to the power of God which was in him smote the rock and there came forth water that [they] the children of Israel might quench their thirst.

And notwithstanding they [the children of Israel] being led The Lord Their God Their Redeemer going before them [the children of Israel] leading ____ them [the children of Israel] by day and giving light unto them [the children of Israel] by night and [The Lord Their God] doing ALL things for them [the children of Israel] which [things] were expedient for man [P= was] (AG) to receive they [the children of Israel] hardened their hearts and [they the children of Israel] blinded their minds and [they the children of Israel] reviled against Moses and against the True and Living God.

And it came to pass that according to His Word

**

He did destroy them [the children of Israel]

and according to His Word

He did lead them [the children of Israel]

[Heb. ** – Passive participle with “of” meaning “by”] [Par. ** Repeated alternating + inverse alternating par.] [Heb. 10 – Pronoun “who” distant from the noun it modifies]
and according to His Word

He did do ALL things for them [the children of Israel]

And there was NOT ANY thing done [for them][the children of Israel]

SAVE it were by His Word

The Lord Esteemeth All Flesh In One
The Lord Will Raise Up a Righteous Nation by Covenant
Wicked Nations Who Reject His Words Are Destroyed

And after they [the children of Israel] had crossed the River Jordan
He did make them [the children of Israel] mighty unto the driving out of the children of the land xx yea unto the scattering them [the children of the land] to destruction

And now Do ye suppose that [they] the children of this land [duality]
who were driven out by our fathers

Do ye suppose that [they] the children of this land were righteous?

Behold [Nephi] say unto you Nay

Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been MORE choice than they [the children of this land] if they [the children of this land] had been righteous?

Behold [Nephi] say unto you Nay

Behold the Lord esteemeth ALL flesh in one * he that is righteous is favored of God*

[see the chiastic structure at the end of the chapter]
But behold this people [the children of this land] had rejected EVERY word of God and they [the children of this land] were ripe in iniquity and the FULNESS of the wrath of God was upon them [the children of this land] [A] and [He the Lord] did curse the land against them [the children of this land] [B] and [He the Lord] did bless it [the land] unto our fathers [A] Yea [He the Lord] did curse it [the land] against them [the children of this land] unto their destruction [B] and [He the Lord] did bless it [the land] unto our fathers unto their obtaining power over it [this land] 36 Behold [A] [He the Lord] hath created the earth [duality – covenant land] [Quote – paraphrase of Isaiah 45:18] that it [the earth] should be inhabited [B] and [He the Lord] hath created His children that they [His children] should possess it [the earth] 37 [A] And [He the Lord] raiseth up a righteous nation [ccc] and the nations of the wicked [B] and [He the Lord] destroyeth the nations of the wicked 38 [A] And [He the Lord] leadeth away the righteous into precious lands and the wicked [B] and [He the Lord] destroyeth [He the Lord] curseth the land unto them [the wicked] for their sakes [as a warning] 39 [He the Lord] ruleth high in the heavens for it [the heavens] is His throne [the seat of His power] ** and this earth is His footstool [that which is subject to His power] [Note: There is an ancient parallelistic symbolism here concerning power. Many modern-day readers will understand the power of the throne, but not the footstool. Anciently when a king conquered an opposing king, he would symbolically put his foot on the conquered king’s neck as he lay prostrate before him. Thus a “footstool” upon which a king places his foot is seen to represent that power.]
And He [the Lord] loveth those who will have Him to be Their God [\(\varphi\) = them which]
Behold He [the Lord] loved our fathers

and He [the Lord] covenanted with them [our fathers]

Yea [He the Lord covenanted] even [with] Abraham [and with] Isaac and [with] Jacob

and He [the Lord] REMEMBERED the covenants which He [the Lord] made [with them]

[Note: There is paralleling here with respect to the covenant fathers. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are specifically named. In each instance (Genesis 12: Abraham; Genesis 26: Isaac; and Genesis 46), the Lord’s covenant blessing of a great posterity is associated with a famine, and with the Lord’s commandments to them relative to going down into Egypt. In each case they obeyed the Lord, and the Lord blessed them.]

Wherefore He [the Lord] did bring them [our fathers] out of the land of Egypt [symbol of bondage]

And He [the Lord] did straighten them [our fathers] in the wilderness with His rod [symbol of power]

for they [our fathers] hardened their hearts even as ye have hardened your hearts

and He [the Lord] straitened them [our fathers] because of their iniquity

He [the Lord] sent ^flying fiery / fiery flying serpents among them \(^O / \varphi\)

and after they [our fathers] were bitten by the flying fiery serpents

He [the Lord] prepared a Way that they [our fathers] might be healed

[Par. ddd – Circular repetition “them” “they”]
[Par. eee – Circular repetition “our fathers”]
[Heb. 12 – Simile “as” comparison]
1 Nephi 17

and the labor of the Way which they [our fathers] had to perform was to look [O, I = were] (AG)

and because of the simpleness of the Way or [because of] the easiness of it [the Way]

there were MANY who perished [I = which]

42 And they [our fathers] did harden their hearts from time to time

and they [our fathers] did revile against Moses and also against God

Nevertheless ye know that they [our fathers] were led forth by His [God’s] matchless power into the land of promise

43 And now after all these things the time has come that they [our fathers] have become wicked yea [they] [our fathers] have become wicked] nearly unto ripeness

and I [Nephi] KNOW NOT but they are at this day about to be destroyed [covenant testimony]

for I [Nephi] KNOW that the day MUST surely come that they [our fathers] MUST be destroyed SAVE a few ONLY who shall be led away [I = which] into captivity

[Note: Chronologically, this verse tells us that the destruction of Jerusalem had not taken place yet.]

44 Wherefore [He] the Lord commanded my father that he [my father] should depart into the wilderness

[Par. ** - Repeated alternating parallelism]
and the Jews also sought to take away his life

yea and ye also have sought to take away his life

Wherefore ye are murderers in your hearts

and ye are like unto them* [f=P= they]
[that are about to be destroyed]

45

But Ye are swift to do iniquity

[ye are] slow to remember the Lord Your God

Ye have seen an angel

and he [the angel] spake unto you

ye have heard his voice from time
to time

and he [the angel] hath spoken unto you

in a still small voice [a whisper] (AL)

but ye were past feeling

that ye could NOT feel his words

Wherefore

he [the angel] has spoken unto you [duality] [*P=hath]

like unto the voice of thunder

which [voice of thunder]

did cause the earth to shake

as if it [the earth] were to divide asunder [apart] (AL)

[Note: This will also happen at the time of the Atonement of Christ. It will also happen when Christ comes to the Nephites in America. The prophetic perfect tense “he has spoken” speaks of something in the future as if it were in the past because it is as good as done, or will surely be fulfilled.]

Nephi Is Filled with the Power of God unto Deliverance

Nephi’s Brethren Are Given a Sign and Testify

But a True Covenant Knowledge Is Still Lacking

46 And ye also know that by the power of His Almighty Word

he can cause the earth that it shall pass away

[Par. fff – Circular repetition “ye”]
[Par. ggg – Alternating contrast parallelism]
[Heb. 13 – Prophetic perfect tense]
[Heb. ** – Simile comparison “like”]
[1 Nephi 17]

Yea and ye know that by the power of His[Almighty] Word he can cause that the rough places to be made smooth ["to" = added]

and [he can cause that] smooth places shall be broken up

O then Why is it that ye can______________ be so hard in your hearts?

47 Behold my soul is rent with anguish because of you

and my heart is pained [because of you]

I [Nephi] fear lest ye shall be cast off forever

Behold I [Nephi] am full of the Spirit of God insomuch as if [that] my frame had / has NO strength [³O / 1837] [AG]

48 And now it came to pass that when I [Nephi] had spoken these words they were angry with me

and [they] were desirous to throw me into the depths of the sea

and as they came forth to lay their hands upon me

I [Nephi] spake unto them saying

In the Name of the Almighty God

I [Nephi] command you that ye touch me NOT

for I [Nephi] am filled with the power of God even unto the consuming of my flesh [*³P= their]

and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither

even as a dried weed / ^reed

and he shall be as naught [nothing] (AL)

before the power of God for God shall smite him

[Par. iii – Alternating contrast] [Heb. ** -- Word pair]
[Heb. ** -- Use of “cause that”] [Heb. ** -- Simile “as a dried reed”]
49 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto them (my brethren) that they should not murmur no more against their father from me. For God had commanded that I should build a ship.

50 And I, Nephi, said unto them (my brethren) if He, God, had commanded me to do all things, then I could do them. If He should command me to say unto this water be thou earth and if I should say it, then it would be done.

51 And now if He, the Lord, has such great power and if He, the Lord, has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that He, the Lord, can NOT instruct me? And I, Nephi, should build a ship?

52 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said many things unto my brethren in so much that they were confounded and they could not contend against me. Neither durst they lay their hands upon me nor durst they touch me with their fingers even for the space of many days.
1 Nephi 17

Now they durst NOT do this
Lest they should wither before me

SO powerful was the Spirit of God
and thus it had wrought upon them [my brethren]

53 And it came to pass
that [He] the Lord said unto me
[A] *Stretch forth thine hand again unto thy brethren
[B] mmm
[C]

but [the Lord] will shock / shake them [O / conjecture - v. 54, 55]

54 And it came to pass
[A] that I [Nephi]

[B] stretched forth my hand unto my brethren

[C]

but the Lord did shake them

55 And now they [my brethren] said

We know of a surety
that the Lord is with thee

for we know that it is the power
of the Lord that has shaken us

And they fell down before me
and were about to worship me

but I [Nephi] would NOT suffer them
saying I [Nephi] yea even thy younger brother

[Par. mmm – Extended alternating parallelism]
Wherefore Worship The Lord Thy God and Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the [promised] land which [promised land] The Lord Thy God shall give thee

[End of Chapter 17]

[Note: According to Donald Parry, a fine example of Chiastic Parallelism is found in 1 Nephi 17:48-52. I have slightly adapted his structure as follows:

48 And now it came to pass that when I had spoken these words, they were angry with me, and were desirous to throw me into the depths of the sea;

(A) and as they came forth to lay their hands upon me
(B) I [Nephi] spake unto them [my brethren], saying:
(C) In the name of The Almighty God, I command you that ye touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh; and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither even as a dried reed; and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for God shall smite him.

49 And it came to pass that I, Nephi said unto them

(D) that they should murmur no more against their father; neither should they withhold their labor from me, for God had commanded me that I should build a ship.

50 And I said unto them:

(E) If God had commanded me to do ALL things
(E') I could do them.

(D) If He [God] should command me

that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.

51 And now,

(C) if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me, that I should build a ship?

52 And it came to pass that

(B) I, Nephi, said many things unto my brethren.

(A) insomuch that they were confounded and could not contend against me; neither durst they lay their hands upon me nor touch me with their fingers, even for the space of many days.

(Donald W. Parry, The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns, F.A.R.M.S., p. 34-35) ]

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[Note: One of the literary devices used in the narrative of 1 Nephi is that of "typology" or the allusion to some aspect of sacred history. Nephi likens his experiences to those of Moses. Nephi also uses multiple parallels between himself and the biblical Joseph, the son of Jacob—the eventual ruler over the covenant house of Jacob (Israel). Here in 1 Nephi 17:23-42, Nephi compares his trials to those of Moses, who led the children of Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land. In 1 Nephi 17:55, we find Nephi's brothers bowing down to him as Joseph's brothers did (see Genesis 43:26; 44:14). For an expanded discussion and listing of those parallels, see the "Typology" section under "Literary Forms" in my Introduction to Volume 1.]

[Note: According to Noel Reynolds, the ship-building story of 1 Nephi 17—18 is an elaborate chiasm dealing with Nephi's response to the murmuring of Laman and Lemuel. The chiastic structure of this story testifies of its importance and probable role in the oral tradition that the early Nephites established to refute the Lamanite claim against Nephi's ruling authority.]

A. Nephi is summoned to the mountain, where he speaks to the Lord (17:7)
B. Nephi is told to construct a ship after the manner the Lord will show him (17:8)
C. The Lord shows Nephi where to find ore to make tools (17:10).
   D. The Lord will miraculously bless them in the wilderness so they will know it was he who delivered them. Nephi keeps the commandments and exhorts his brethren to faithfulness (17:12-15).
   E. Nephi's brethren murmur against him and withhold their labor from him (17:17-18).
   F. Nephi is exceedingly sorrowful (17:19).
   G. Nephi's brethren present the details of their case against him and their father (17:19-21).
   H. Nephi's brethren defend the Jews of Jerusalem for their righteousness (17:22)
      I. Although the Lord by miracles led "our fathers," the Israelites, out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the promised land, they hardened their hearts and reviled against both Moses and God (17:23-30).
      J. God blesses the righteous and destroys the wicked. He "esteemeth all flesh in one."
         Whoever is righteous is favored of the Lord (17:31-5).
      J' The Lord blesses the righteous and destroys the wicked. He loves whoever will have him to be their God (17:36-40)
      I' Even though the Lord loved "our fathers," covenanted with them, led them out of Egypt, and straitened them by miraculous means in the wilderness, still they hardened their hearts and reviled against both Moses and God (17:40-2).
   H' Nephi prophesies the destruction of the Jews of Jerusalem for their wickedness (17:43).
   G' Nephi presents the case against his brethren (17:44-6).
   F' Nephi's soul is rent with anguish (17:47).
   E' Nephi's brethren are angry with him, but he commands them not to withhold their labor from him (17:48-9).
   D' The Lord miraculously shocks Nephi's brethren so they will know the Lord is their God. Nephi tells them to obey specific commandments (17:53-5).
   C' The Lord shows Nephi how to work timbers for the ship (18:1).
   B' Nephi builds the ship after the manner the Lord has shown him (18:2).
   A' Nephi often goes to the mount to pray to the Lord (18:3).